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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

# Status Report on Gender Equality 2019 **Striving for Transformative Change**





# Foreword

While the world witnessed progress towards gender equality in some areas during the last decades, overall progress is too slow and piecemeal. The newest data show that global efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 are off track and lack adequate funding. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres firmly put it on the occasion of the International Women's Day in 2020, persisting and partially increasing inequality for women "should shame us all in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it is not only unacceptable, it is stupid."

Gender equality is a human right and, as such, lies at the core of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) work and its human rights-based approach. Societies cannot truly be peaceful and prosperous if they systematically violate the rights and needs of half of their populations. Women's socio-economic empowerment is also quintessential to achieve long-term inclusive development: they represent almost 70 percent of the world's poor, and their risk to fall below the poverty line is 25 percent higher than it is for men. It has repeatedly been stressed that countries with high levels of gender inequality forgo considerable potential for economic growth. Thus, if we want to make justice to our mandate to promote sustainable development, efforts to foster gender equality in the political, economic, and public sphere are paramount.

Today, the largest gender gaps concern women's unequal economic and political participation. In the economic realm, women still face gendered barriers in the access to labour markets, while social and legal restrictions affect their use and control over resources and assets such as land. Globally, the call for "equal pay for equal work" remains unfulfilled. In the political sphere, women are still underrepresented in decision-making bodies and leading positions at both national and subnational level. Everywhere, their voices and needs are at risk of not being heard. Even Switzerland only recently succeeded in increasing the number of female members of the National Council to 42 percent thanks to a coordinated campaign spurred by civil society ("Helvetia Calling") and the powerful repercussions of the Women's Strike on 14 June 2019.

Gender inequalities and discrimination are deeply rooted in legal norms and social and institutional practices that uphold unequal gender relations and perpetuate the power imbalance between men and women. Women are confined to specific tasks and roles that are systematically devalued. Unequal gender relations find their most blatant manifestation in the widespread phenomenon of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). For women all over the world, the experience of SGBV, especially domestic violence by intimate partners, is an existential threat – both in times of conflict and peace. SGBV represents an imminent barrier for them to fully realise their potential and contribute to their communities. Therefore, the SDC is strongly committed to counter women's institutionalised discrimination in general and the normalisation of SGBV in particular.

This report delivers proof of the SDC's contribution to gender equality in its partner countries in 2019. With continuous policy dialogue and a broad spectrum of gender equality-focused projects, the SDC strives to transform unequal gender relations and improve women's living conditions on the ground. This means going beyond numerical gender equality and seek substantial impact that makes a difference in women's and men's everyday lives. Selected project cases illuminate how we pursued our strategic priorities to increase women's political and economic empowerment and combat SGBV. The SDC's interventions within the three gender strategic priorities also contribute to its broader efforts to prevent conflict and foster peace. In the same vein, the SDC strongly supports women's equal participation in the dialogue on security and fosters the inclusion of their voices and knowledge in the context of peace processes and peace-building measures. Women's inclusion is crucial to enable fragile and war-torn countries to transform towards more peaceful societies.

In order to initiate long-term transformative change, the SDC is eager to engage men and boys and encourages them to become advocates for women's rights and equal opportunities. Across the three strategic priorities, projects tried to involve male spouses, youth and relevant opinion leaders to address the persistent gender stereotypes, patriarchal norms and discriminating social practices. Some projects successfully witnessed encouraging behavioural shifts with positive, liberating effects for women. Against this background, during last year's face-to-face meeting in Berne, SDC staff passionately discussed how to achieve greater gender transformative progress that precisely tackles the root causes of inequality. We will keep up with that same spirit going forward and continue to invest in women's and girls' lives to close the gender gap and transform gender relations to make them equal.

We wish you a good read!



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# Main Messages

## **1. Unique Opportunity to Continue Joint Efforts Towards Global Gender Equality**

The UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development represents a unique opportunity as well as a challenge for the SDC and its partners to jointly work for gender equality and the commitments under SDG 5 in the Agenda. Despite increasing efforts to reduce gender gaps and spur the empowerment of women and girls, the current pace of progress is too slow to reach the targets. Both financial investments and the collection of gender data to strengthen evidence-based policy-making need to increase. SDG 5 is the third most underfinanced goal, while a severe gender data gap prevents the continuous monitoring of progress towards gender equality both at national level and within the SDG framework.

## **2. Let's Be Gender-Transformative – a Milestone of Joint Reflection and Learning in 2019**

In 2019, the SDC strengthened its commitment towards a more gender-transformative approach. The SDC Gender Focal Points from across the world gathered to share their experience, proven practice and various challenges in tackling the persistent gender inequality in their countries. Though the contexts are different, the key challenges are similar – and considerable. It requires strategic and concerted measures to address structural barriers and the underlying power imbalance. Participants reflected on implications for programme design and steering. They emphasised the importance to start with a sound gender analysis at early stages and to build previous findings more explicitly and systematically into the programme design, including the theory of change. Initiated learning shall be continued in the coming year.

## **3. Contribution to Tangible Results**

The SDC continued to promote women's political and economic empowerment and to address the devastating effects of SGBV. In many partner countries, women benefitted from improved access to economic resources, such as land or financial services, from skills training and income-generating activities mainly in rural markets. Women were also supported to improve their livelihoods, thereby gaining recognition and decision-making authority within their communities. In the political sphere, progress was achieved in enhancing women's

engagement and influence in decision-making processes at local level, as well as in the pursuit of gender-responsive management of public finance. Results of several interventions showed that the SDC and its partners actively contributed to the reduction of women's time burden due to unpaid care work and to more supportive attitudes in their social environment. In 2019, 62'776 women and men subjected to SGBV received psychosocial, medical, and/or legal support thanks to our interventions. Addressing pervasive SGBV were also topics intensively dealt with at headquarters during several events.

## **4. The SDC Financial Commitments – Still a Way to Go**

The SDC committed CHF 925'432'268 (60 percent) of all bilateral aid to interventions focusing on gender equality, of which CHF 59'968'550 (4 percent) were channelled to projects and programmes with gender equality as their principal objective and CHF 865'463'718 (56 percent) to those integrating gender with targeted measures (gender-significant interventions). Compared with the previous year, this is a decrease of funds for gender equality-focused support. Although the figures correspond to the average of other OECD countries, increased financial commitments are necessary to reach the targets of 10 and 75 percent of all bilateral funds, respectively.

## **5. The SDC's Contribution to Global Policy Development**

Jointly with its partners around the world, the SDC contributed to identify solutions for important bottlenecks and challenges in advancing the gender equality targets. Several options to enhance funding for gender equality were discussed and key lessons, particularly in the area of SGBV and social protection for women and girls, were shared. Additionally, the SDC and its partners contributed to national and international gender data management systems, as selected examples demonstrate, but it is clear that we should further step up our efforts to that effect. Consequently, strengthening data for development will be a topic of further pursuit in the coming years.

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# 1 Gender Equality in a Rapidly Changing World

Switzerland and the other member states of the United Nations (UN) have agreed on a global compact, the Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Agenda 2030 represents a unique opportunity for all stakeholders – development organisations, governments, civil society, research and the private sector – to jointly work towards gender equality and the commitments made under SDG 5. In the last decade, development organisations and governments have successfully introduced gender equality principles into their policies. Their financial investments in gender equality issues and the collection of gender data to strengthen evidence-based policy-making have increased. Still, more efforts are needed to achieve the goals agreed upon. According to the latest figures, SDG 5 is the third most underfinanced SDG.<sup>1</sup>

The availability and quality of gender data are still scarce. Across countries, about 85 percent of SDG 5 indicators are not regularly collected and almost 10 percent remain underdeveloped.<sup>2</sup> While it is a success that the SDG framework includes a total of 54 indicators to measure gender-related progress across different goals, it does not cover them all systematically. For example, gender-specific indicators are missing in the goals on clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and the environment (SDG 14 and 15). Women<sup>3</sup> and marginalised groups facing multiple inequalities are often not taken into account, and important aspects of women's and men's lives are still not measured.<sup>4</sup> Also, only 12 of the 54 indicators are measured in such a frequency and quality that monitoring progress across all regions is possible.<sup>5</sup> Further limitations are lacking data compar-

ability, technical capacity and financial constraints within national statistical systems. To overcome these hurdles, a global agreement on principles and standards for data is urgently needed, including the demand to collect robust gender data, as well as financial resources and capacity building to improve and coordinate the data management at different levels.<sup>6</sup>

Latest gender data demonstrate that despite increasing efforts to reduce gender gaps and to foster empowerment for women, it will require at least 100 years to achieve SDG 5 at the current progress pace.<sup>7</sup> According to the Equal Measures 2030 SDG Gender Index, nearly 40 percent of women live in countries failing on gender equality.<sup>8</sup> Among the SDGs lagging most behind is SDG 5 and other highly gender-relevant SDGs like SDG 17 (partnerships, i.a. gender data), SDG 13 (climate change, i.a. gendered climate vulnerability), and SDG 9 (infrastructure and innovation, i.a. the digital gender gap).

With regard to the SDG 5 targets, the ones on women's political participation are most underperforming.<sup>9</sup> Despite positive trends, women hold only 25 percent of seats in national parliaments and 21 percent of ministerial positions. This limits the possibilities to put their priorities on the political agenda and to influence decisions affecting their lives – for example the allocation of public resources. The lack of women's decision-making power is reflected in the economic sphere as well, where they hold only 27 percent of managerial positions.<sup>10</sup> In general, women's participation in the labour force stagnated at 31 percent, and they are paid 16 percent less than men on average. Every day, women spend three times more time than men on unpaid care and domestic work.<sup>11</sup> Their workload generally increases when they are married, have young

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1 [OECD \(2020\): Putting Finance to Work for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The Way Forward.](#)

2 [UN \(2019\): The Future is Now. Science for Achieving Sustainable Development.](#)

3 Henceforth in this report, the expression women is used and understood as including girls.

4 [Equal Measures 2030 \(2019\): Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality. Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index.](#) The index includes 51 indicators across 14 of the 17 SDGs and covers 129 countries across all regions. Published for the first time in 2019.

5 [UN Women \(2018\): Making women and girls visible: Gender data gaps and why they matter.](#)

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6 [UN \(2014\): A World that Counts. Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.](#)

7 The number varies from 100 to 200 years, depending on different forms of measurement. See [OECD \(2019\): SIGI 2019 Global Report \(200 years\)](#) or [WEF \(2019\): Global Gender Gap Report 2020 \(100 years\)](#).

8 [Equal Measures 2030 \(2019\): Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality. Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index.](#)

9 [Ibid.](#)

10 [UN \(2019\): Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019.](#)

11 [Ibid.](#)

children, live in a rural region and in a poorer household. Consequently, women either have less time for paid work, education, and other activities, or they are confronted with an even greater workload (“double burden”).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, domestic violence is still pervasive worldwide. On average, 31 percent of women in a relationship have suffered intimate-partner violence at least once in their lifetime.<sup>13</sup> The stigmatisation of survivors and social norms declaring SGBV a private matter still prevent women from reporting crimes and to access adequate services.

Certainly, important progress has been made over the past years, for example with the successful improvements in women’s health and education, the reduced prevalence of female genital mutilation and early marriages, or with gender-equitable legislation. However, still much needs to be done, as even achieved progress comes under pressure. Guaranteeing women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is contested and budget cuts in essential public services risk to have negative impacts on women, particularly in low-income countries. Protracted conflict, humanitarian crisis, and environmental degradation increase women’s specific vulnerability and exposure to violence and abuse.<sup>14</sup> The emergence of authoritarian tendencies, often coupled with a rise in conservatism and a patriarchal backlash, negatively impact women’s empowerment. Joint efforts are all the more paramount to achieve the Agenda 2030’s SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

#### **Trends in Financing for Gender Equality**

The Agenda 2030 envisions a world in which gender equality is fully realised. This commitment requires a range of tools and efforts that must be underpinned by financial investments. A new study by the GenderNet of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) reveals that financing for gender equality is largely underdeveloped.<sup>15</sup> The study looks into different innovative financing formats and tools with the potential of addressing gender inequalities, for example by mobilising philanthropic funds or private finance for social outcomes. Overall, different potentials should be explored to better use the full spectrum of available finance. At the same time, an increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows and domestic budget allocations need a further push. The SDC, together with the OECD DAC GenderNet and development finance experts, will strengthen its efforts to understand country and sector-specific needs and the according alignment of financial resources. For example, the SDC will scrutinise opportunities to finance women’s grassroots organisations. In addition, dialogue, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning between gender and finance specialists must be promoted so as to develop innovative products targeting women.

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<sup>12</sup> [UN Women \(2019\): Families in a Changing World. Progress of the World’s Women 2019–2020.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [OECD \(2019\): SIGI 2019 Global Report.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [UN Women \(2020\): Gender Equality. Women’s Rights in Review 25 Years after Beijing.](#)

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<sup>15</sup> [OECD \(2020\): Putting Finance to Work for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. The Way Forward.](#)

# 2 The SDC's Contribution and Priorities in 2019

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and SDG 5 are the cornerstone of Switzerland's engagement for gender equality. Based on the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–2020, the SDC's contribution to close the gender gap is guided by three strategic areas: the prevention of SGBV, the economic empowerment and the political participation of women.<sup>16</sup> Important cross-cutting aspects, such as addressing unpaid care and domestic work or engaging men and boys, have gained increasing attention. Additionally, gender equality has been declared as a transversal concern, cross-cutting all areas of cooperation.

The "Report on Effectiveness" in the field of gender equality published in 2018 called for a more gender-transformative approach in all country programmes and thematic sectors, as well as increased capacity building for staff and partners to improve gender-responsive analysis, design and implementation.<sup>17</sup> These two aspects built the focus of the SDC's gender mainstreaming efforts at different levels in 2019.

## Support to Programmatic Work

To become more gender-transformative means that interventions contribute to more equal gender norms and roles and promote more balanced power relations between men and women, thereby addressing structural causes of gender inequality. In-depth gender analyses are needed at the outset for projects and programmes to go beyond equal numerical participation of men and women in their activities, and to guarantee not only equal access to resources, services and political fora but also to ensure equal control over such resources, equal benefits and women's actual decision-making power. Over the last years, the SDC Gender Network elaborated a number of tools that support practitioners in the field on how to integrate gender in their work. In 2019, five new thematic guidance sheets were published: "Gender and water"; "Gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction"; "Women's financial inclusion"; "Engaging men and boys"; and "Inclusive and gender-responsive budgeting".<sup>18</sup> In addition, together with the Gender Focal Points in geographic divisions, the SDC Gender Unit provided advice for a more systematic integration of the gender perspective during milestones of the project cycle management (PCM).

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<sup>16</sup> FDFA (2016): Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–2020.

<sup>17</sup> FDFA (2018): Report on Effectiveness. Swiss international cooperation in the field of gender equality 2007–2016.

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<sup>18</sup> Find these thematic guidance sheets in the toolbox on the Shareweb Gender.



## Capacity Development and Joint Learning

**Face-to-Face:** In 2019, the SDC organised a three-day face-to-face meeting of all SDC Gender Focal Points from the headquarters and Swiss Cooperation Offices.<sup>19</sup> They shared best practices and new initiatives on SGBV, engaging with men and boys, women’s economic empowerment (WEE), and political participation. Participants engaged in joint reflections on how to move a step further.<sup>20</sup> They also discussed available institutional gender tools and how to use them for operational work. The importance of high-quality gender data was stressed throughout the event.

**Training of Trainers:** Following the face-to-face meeting, the SDC’s Gender Network for the first time held a two-day training of trainers workshop.<sup>21</sup> The workshop supported Gender Focal Points in their multiple roles as advisors, facilitators, and leaders for their office colleagues and partners. In line with the PCM framework, skills on how to integrate gender in the analysis, design, planning and monitoring and evaluation stages of a project or programme were taught and reinforced.

**Gender Learning Day:** The annual Gender Learning Day focused on the implementation of the Swiss National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP) 1325. It was organised by the Swiss NGO Platform that accompanies the NAP 1325 implementation and further conducted a study on critical issues for reflection.<sup>22</sup> Participants exchanged views on the topics “Women, Peace, Security and the Prevention of Violence” and “Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism”. The discussions involved numerous national and international stakeholders.<sup>23</sup> One of the highlighted challenges was the neglect of women’s central role in conflict prevention at the grassroots level and the severe underfunding of their initiatives.

**Campaign “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” at the SDC:** On the occasion of this international campaign, the SDC Gender Unit organised an event on the sensitive topic of sexual violence against men and boys, as well as a visit of a public exhibition on SGBV. Moreover, NGOs were invited to present their organizations’ policies on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH). Several Swiss Country Offices contributed to the campaign with their own initiatives.

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19 For more information on the event, see [event page on the Shareweb Gender](#).

20 For more insights, see chapters 4.1 – 4.3.

21 For more information on the event, see [event page on the Shareweb Gender](#).

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22 [Swisspeace, cfd, Peace Women across the Globe,](#)

[WIDE Switzerland \(2016\): Frauen Frieden Sicherheit – reloaded.](#)

23 For more information on the event, see [event page on the Shareweb Gender](#).

## Institutional Priorities and Developments

**Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH):** Following the reports on incidents of sexual assault in international cooperation, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) has committed itself to a zero tolerance-policy regarding sexual assault by FDFA and partner organisations' staff towards other staff members and project beneficiaries alike. Subsequently, the SDC Directorate appointed a Focal Point within the SDC (Gender Focal Point of Humanitarian Aid) with the task to identify gaps and possible action lines in the collaboration of the SDC with its partner organisations. Together with a newly established internal PSEAH working group, the Focal Point started to clarify communication flows within the SDC in case of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) incidents in partner organisations and to prepare a guidance for integrating PSEAH in the partner risk assessment. In addition, the Institutional Partnership Division engaged in a dialogue with and capacity building of institutional partners.

**Developing the Thematic Cluster on Peace, Governance, and Equality (PGE):** With the purpose to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of the closely related thematic units and networks on Gender, Governance (DDLG), Fragility, Conflict and Human Rights (FCHR), and Poverty and Wellbeing / Leave No One Behind (LNOB), the units jointly initiated a more systematic collaboration. For the first time, they defined a common annual plan. 2019 was the year of further deepening common ground, with the goal of reporting on more advanced results in 2020.

**Change of Personnel:** 2019 was also marked by a change in leadership within the SDC's Gender Network: After six years, Ursula Keller handed over the position as SDC's Gender Policy Advisor and Head of the Gender Network at headquarters to Corinne Huser, who took over in September 2019. Corinne Huser will be in charge of the network's continued efforts for gender equality. A further change in leadership was announced at the level of the SDC Director-General: With Patricia Danzi, the first woman ever was elected as the new Head of the SDC. She will take over the position of Manuel Sager in May 2020.

## Policy Dialogue

**OECD DAC GenderNet:** As programmatic work is more effective when linked to strategic policy dialogue, the SDC has continued to engage in international platforms to influence global processes in the realm of gender equality. As Co-Chair of the OECD DAC GenderNet, the SDC has had a critical role in shaping the agenda for joint learning and standard setting among development partners. During its annual meeting, the OECD DAC GenderNet dealt with issues such as financing for gender equality and ending violence against women and girls. Shared research findings confirmed the SDC's practice against SGBV, namely to follow a community-based approach and to work with men and boys, as well as to promote the provision of comprehensive SGBV care services. Moreover, findings confirmed that women's economic empowerment can be an exit strategy for women suffering from violence, while education projects seem to be a good entry point for violence prevention. In addition, several initiatives on gender-related finance were presented, among others the innovative SDC example on social impact incentives for private businesses providing solar home systems and solar-powered agro-processing community mills run by women entrepreneurs. The so-called "Gender Finance Collaborative", a group of 15 developmental finance institutions, has developed a knowledge base on gender-smart investing open to the public. Further, member states exchanged on their efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming. The OECD DAC GenderNet Secretariat was also engaged in preparing the OECD DAC recommendations on ending SEAH, adopted in July 2019.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> [OECD DAC \(2019\): Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance.](#)

**The Commission on the Status of Women:** In the annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York City, the Gender Policy Advisor was part of the Swiss delegation. The 2019 session focused on social protection systems for women and their access to public services and sustainable infrastructure. The Policy Advisor contributed to the debates and participated in various side-events.<sup>25</sup> Together with the OECD, Switzerland co-organised a side event to launch the OECD Development Policy Paper on policy approaches to address unpaid care work.<sup>26</sup> The paper presents new research on what works to address unpaid care work through investments in four policy domains, as outlined in the SDG 5.4.<sup>27</sup>

#### Contribution to Gender Data

A widely used instrument to measure gender equality is the OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), which is financially supported by the SDC.<sup>28</sup> The SIGI measures discrimination against women in social institutions across 180 countries. Discriminatory social institutions are formal and informal laws, attitudes, and practices that restrict women's rights, as well as their access to empowerment opportunities and resources. The index consists of 33 indicators which cover four dimensions of discriminatory social institutions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect women's lives: 1) discrimination in the family; 2) restricted physical integrity; 3) restricted access to productive and financial resources; and 4) restricted civil liberties. Through its database, country profiles, and a policy simulator, the SIGI provides a strong evidence base to effectively address gender inequalities and monitor change.

In addition, the SDC contributes to Switzerland's support of ongoing efforts to improve the production and use of data for development and to strengthen the collaboration of involved stakeholders. In October 2020, Berne will be the host city of the 8<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Gender Statistics,<sup>29</sup> the regional Gender Statistics Forum, and the UN World Data Forum (UNWDF).<sup>30</sup> In the spirit of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this will be an opportunity to discuss ways to improve data as evidence base for gender policy-making, programming and advocacy. The aim is to create a platform for intensifying cooperation among various groups of professionals, such as information technology experts, statisticians, data scientists, and women's organisations.

25 For more information, see the FDFA [press release on the CSW 2019](#).

26 [OECD DAC \(2019\): Breaking down barriers to women's economic empowerment: Policy approaches to addressing unpaid care work](#).

27 "Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."

28 See the [SIGI web page](#).

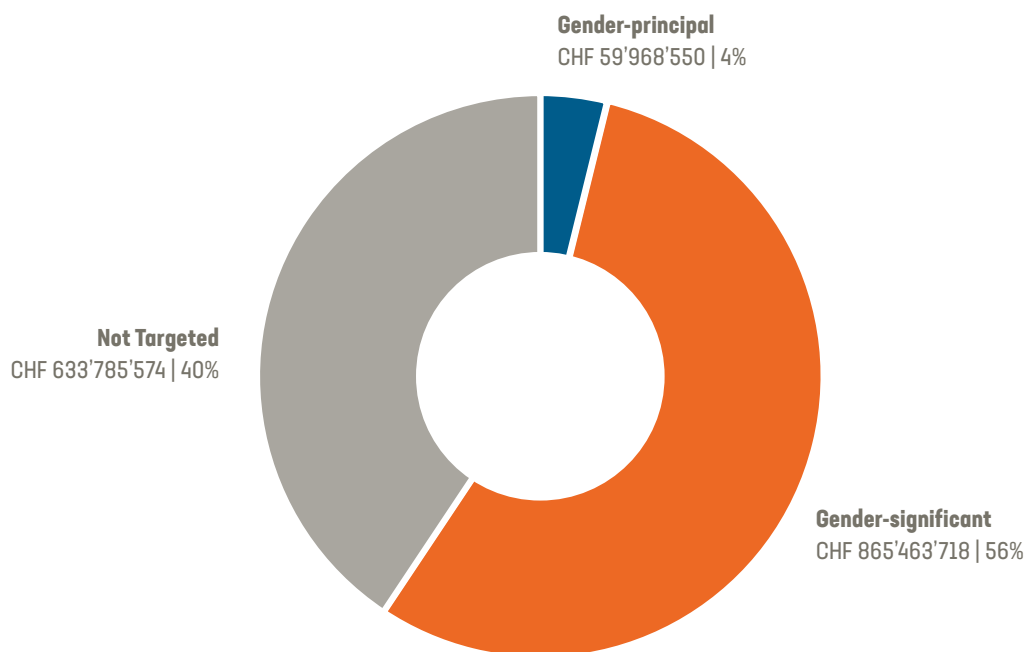
29 For more information see [8<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Gender Statistics 2020](#).

30 For more information see [UN World Data Forum 2020](#).

# 3 The SDC's Financial Commitments to Gender Equality

In 2019, the SDC committed a total of CHF 1'559'217'842<sup>31</sup> to bilateral aid, including global programmes, humanitarian interventions and institutional contributions to Swiss non-governmental organisations. This means CHF 414'160'876 more than in the previous year. CHF 925'432'268 (60 percent) were invested in interventions focusing on gender equality, meaning that CHF 633'785'574 (40 percent) of all bilateral funds did not target gender. From the total amount, only CHF 59'968'550 (roughly 4 percent) were dedicated to gender-principal interventions focusing on gender equality as their main objective. A higher amount of CHF 865'463'718 (56 percent) was committed to gender-significant interventions targeting gender equality as a transversal issue. Additionally, the SDC contributed CHF 19'215'349 for multilateral aid to UN Women and CHF 25'968'445 to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN's specialised agency for sexual and reproductive health.

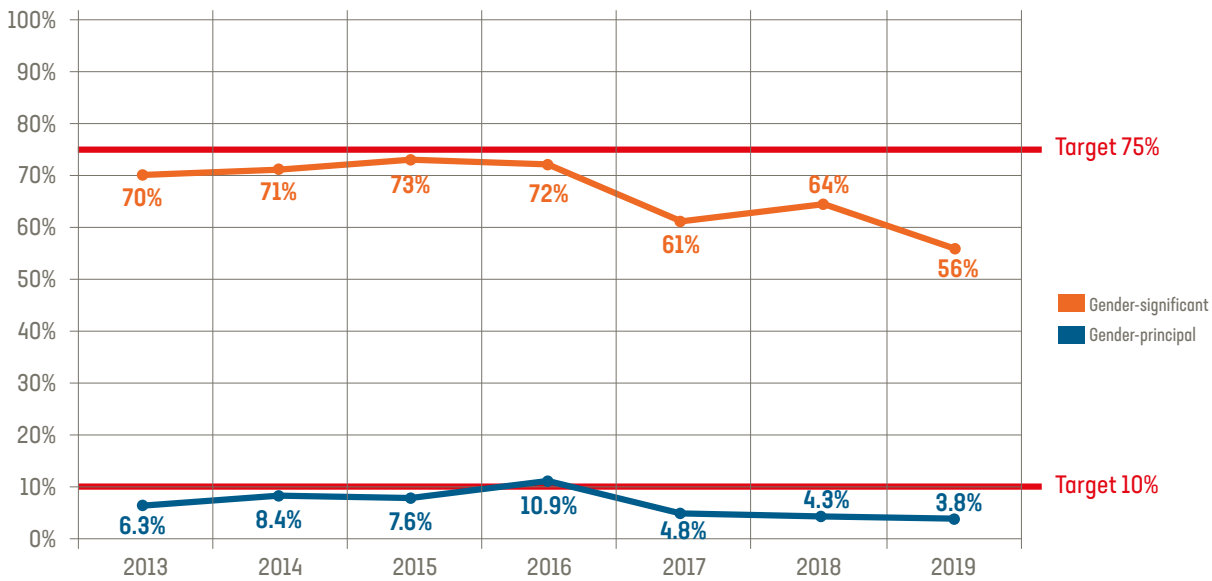
**Figure 1:** Allocation of the SDC's committed bilateral funds in CHF in 2019



<sup>31</sup> The numbers are based on the SDC Policy Marker. The Policy Marker records the commitments for interventions in total during the first year of a project or programme, even if they are multi-year commitments, and irrespective of disbursement timing.

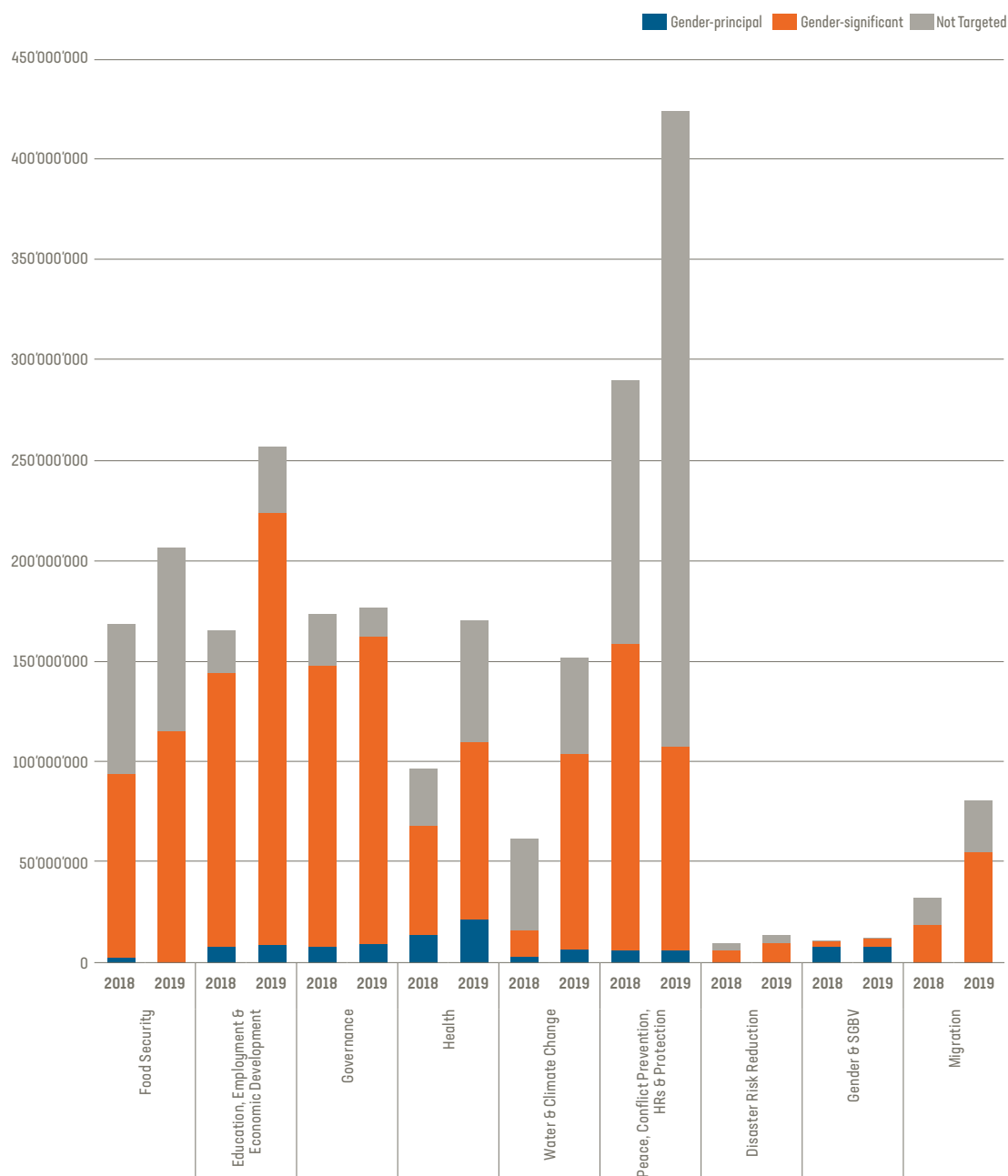
As **Figure 2** demonstrates, **the envisioned target** of the SDC is to allocate 10 percent of all bilateral funds to gender-principal interventions and 75 percent to gender-significant interventions. In 2019, the SDC has not reached these goals yet – it lags behind. Compared to 2018, the funds committed to gender-principal interventions decreased from 4.3 percent to 3.8 percent. For the gender-significant interventions, there was a reduction to 56 percent compared to 64 percent in 2018. As for previous years (mainly from 2016 to 2017), this notable decline in funding for gender equality-focused interventions is partially explainable by a more rigorous application of the Gender Policy Marker after the introduction of the new Gender Checklist (adjusted to the Policy Marker of the OECD DAC). That being said, it also highlights the need for stepping up efforts to systematically integrate the gender dimension in the SDC’s operational work. In the coming years, the SDC will be challenged to further increase its efforts and commitment to invest in gender-principal and gender-significant interventions while aiming for transformative impact.

**Figure 2:** Trends in bilateral funds committed to interventions focusing on gender equality



Regarding **the thematic distribution** of the committed bilateral funds in 2019, **Figure 3** demonstrates that investments focusing on gender equality were channelled to three major areas: 1) Education, Employment & Economic Development (CHF 223'531'793); 2) Governance (CHF 161'754'582); and 3) Food Security (CHF 116'277'200), closely followed by Health. The two areas that directed most funding to gender-principal interventions in 2019 were Health (CHF 21'271'000), and Governance (CHF 9'140'000), closely followed by SGBV (CHF 7'568'200). Two out of the nine thematic areas, namely Migration and Disaster Risk Reduction, did not fund any gender-principal interventions in 2019. When looking at gender-significant interventions only, a slightly different picture emerges: Most funds for gender-significant interventions in 2019 were awarded in the area of Education, Employment & Economic Development (CHF 215'243'243), Governance (CHF 152'614'582), and Food Security (CHF 116'277'200). The thematic areas scoring the most not targeted funds in 2019 were Peace, Conflict Prevention, Human Rights & Protection (CHF 316'407'484, largely in protection) and Food Security (CHF 90'167'505).

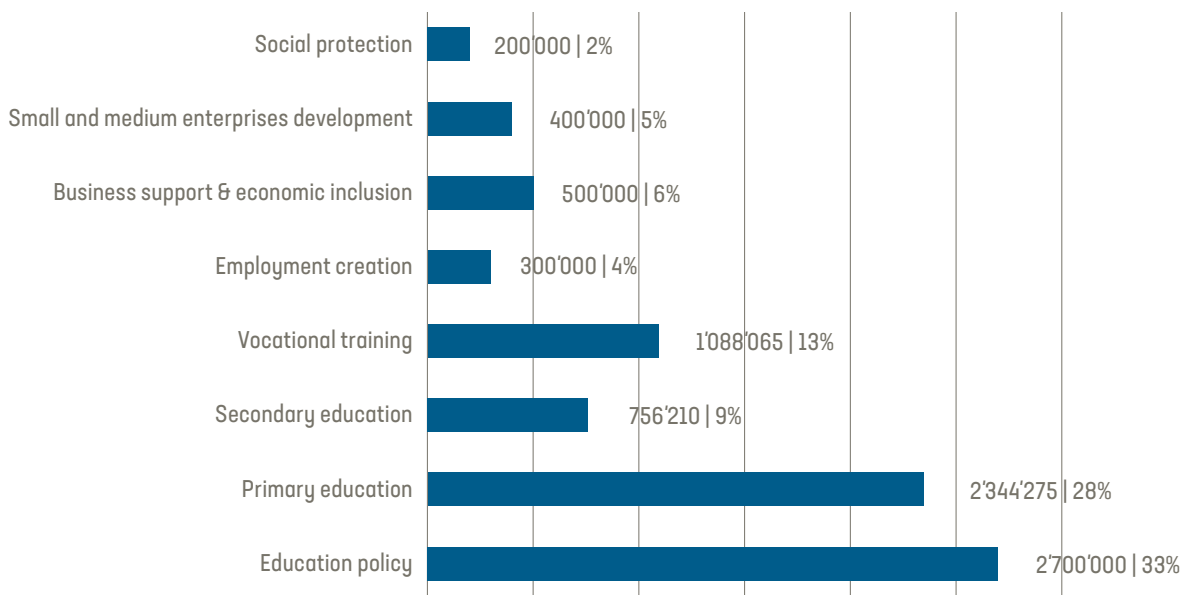
**Figure 3:** Allocation of the SDC's committed bilateral funds (in CHF) per thematic area in the years 2018 and 2019



Looking at the **most relevant shifts from 2018 to 2019**, the following can be observed. The most remarkable increase in funds committed to gender-principal interventions occurred in the thematic area of Health. In 2018, CHF 13'863'385 were channelled to gender-principal projects and programmes, followed by CHF 21'271'000 in 2019. This shows a continuous growth of CHF 7'407'616 from 2018 to 2019. Funds for gender-significant interventions increased mostly in the thematic area of Education, Employment & Economic Development. In 2018, CHF 136'235'578 were committed to this area, followed by a significant growth to CHF 215'243'243 in 2019. The trends in Food Security and Water & Climate Change are noteworthy as well: After a remarkable decrease in 2018 the trend is now increasing, especially for the latter. Moreover, there was a noticeable increase of not targeted funds in the area of Peace, Conflict Prevention, Human Rights & Protection, particularly in protection: the funding amounted to CHF 130'662'903 in 2018 and reached CHF 316'407'484 in 2019. In general, the shifts in committed funds can be explained by the fact that an intervention can run for several years, while the Gender Policy Marker registers the whole amount of the committed funds only for the starting year of a project or programme.

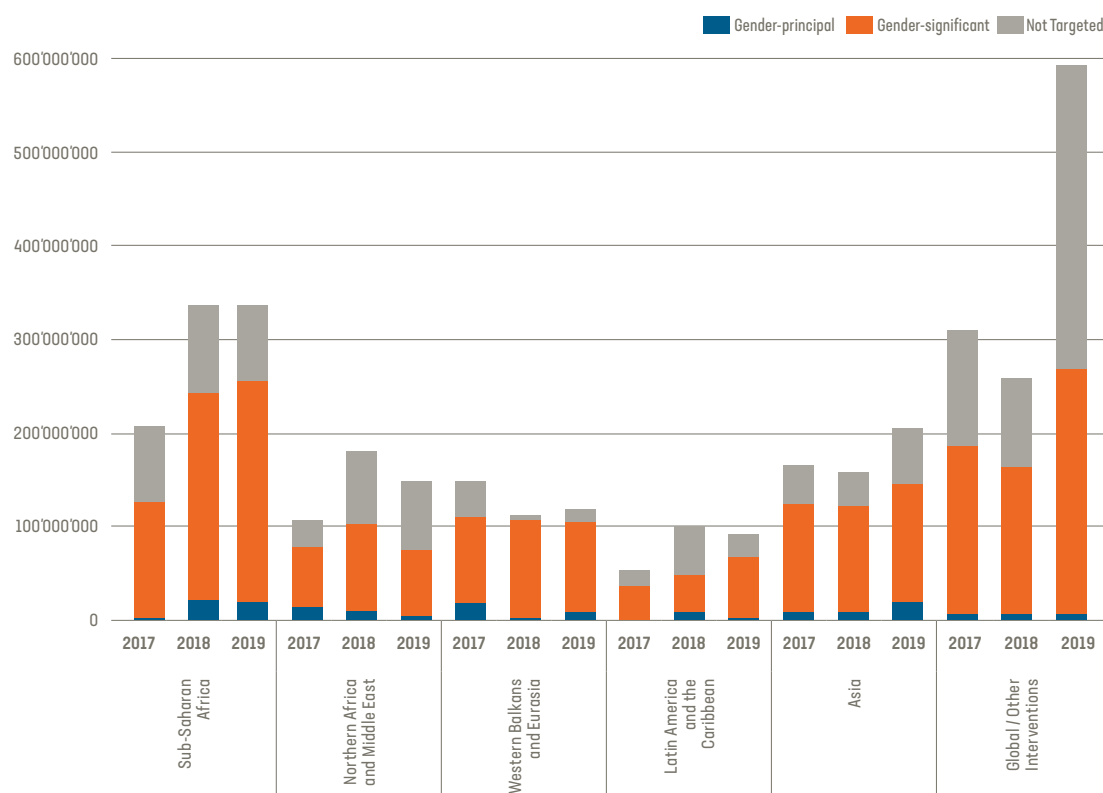
**Figure 4** presents the details of committed funds for gender-principal interventions in the thematic area of **Education, Employment & Economic Development**. This thematic area has constantly contributed to the share of gender-principal interventions since 2017. In 2019, the total amount was CHF 8'288'550. The analysis of this data shows that the SDC directed most funds to the area of education, in particular to education policy interventions (CHF 2'700'000, 33 percent) and to primary education (CHF 2'344'275, 28 percent), followed by CHF 1'088'065 (13 percent) for vocational training and CHF 756'210 (9 percent) for secondary education projects and programmes. Interestingly, only CHF 300'000 (4 percent) were committed to employment creation interventions, a major objective of Switzerland's future Strategy on International Cooperation. Noteworthy is also the small amount of channelled funds to social protection projects (CHF 200'000, 2 percent), especially against the background of the high proportion of unpaid domestic and care work performed by women and their broad activity in the informal economy.

**Figure 4:** Allocation of committed funds (in CHF) for gender-principal interventions in the thematic area of Education, Employment & Economic Development and its subfields in 2019



**Figure 5** shows the **geographical distribution** of overall bilateral funds in 2017, 2018, and 2019. During this period, the highest amount of overall funding was committed to global and other interventions (i.e. programmes and projects without a specific regional focus), followed by funds flowing to Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2019, most gender-principal project funds were committed to Asia (CHF 19'900'000) and Sub-Saharan Africa (CHF 18'905'000). Looking at the funds channelled to gender-significant projects and programmes, the highest amount was dedicated to global and other interventions (CHF 262'626'563), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (CHF 236'830'839). Most not targeted funds (CHF 323'582'044) were committed to global and other interventions. When assessing the development of bilateral funds in absolute numbers over time, global and other kind of interventions experienced a remarkable growth in funds. In this category, gender-significant and non-targeted funding rose significantly in 2019. Gender-principal funds were increased mostly for Asia.

**Figure 5:** Allocation of the SDC's committed bilateral funds (in CHF) per geographic area in 2017, 2018 and 2019<sup>32</sup>



### The SDC Gender Policy Marker

The SDC Gender Policy Marker (GPM)<sup>33</sup> is a tool to monitor and track the integration of and resource allocation to gender equality. All Swiss bilateral development interventions must be marked with the SDC GPM. The latter is based on the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker.<sup>34</sup> It distinguishes between gender-principal, gender-significant and not targeted interventions, as well as core contributions to multilateral and institutional partners. An intervention's assessment based on the GPM takes place at project level in the planning stage, as part of financing decisions on credit proposals. Therefore, the GPM records the total commitments at the time they are made, even if they are multi-year commitments and irrespective of their disbursement timing. Data of the OECD DAC imply that there is only a small difference over time between commitment and disbursement, although there can be some delay in the case of pluri-annual disbursements.

An intervention is considered gender-principal if gender equality and women's rights are fundamental in its design and expected results. This kind of intervention would not be conducted without the envisioned gender-equality objective. An intervention is gender-significant if gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for the undertaking. Finally, not targeted interventions do not address gender equality in any specific way. The total amount of interventions marked as principal and significant are counted as gender equality-focused aid by the OECD DAC.

<sup>32</sup> The numbers of 2017 and 2019 do not include funds for European countries, Switzerland, and "not specified" countries.

Those for 2018 do not include funds for European countries, Switzerland, the Pacific/Oceania Region, and "not specified" countries.

<sup>33</sup> See the [SDC Gender Policy Marker](#).

<sup>34</sup> See the [OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#).



# 4 The SDC's Gender Equality Results 2019

This chapter demonstrates how the SDC and its partners contributed to strengthen gender equality in 2019.

Overall, measuring gender equality-related results remains challenging. Changing gender roles, attitudes, and norms in a complex environment with different actors and initiatives are difficult to capture. It is not easy to identify why particular changes occurred, and which factors have caused positively or negatively to specific changes (attribution gap). In addition, the aggregation of data across regions and over time is often difficult due to different contexts, indicators and monitoring systems. For this report, data were drawn from 13 selected SDC project examples and based on the aggregation of one gender reference indicator for each priority theme (the three so-called Aggregated Reference Indicators, ARI). Given that the SDC did not produce a synthesised results report in 2019, the aggregation of the larger spectrum of gender reference indicators and results across geographic regions was not possible.

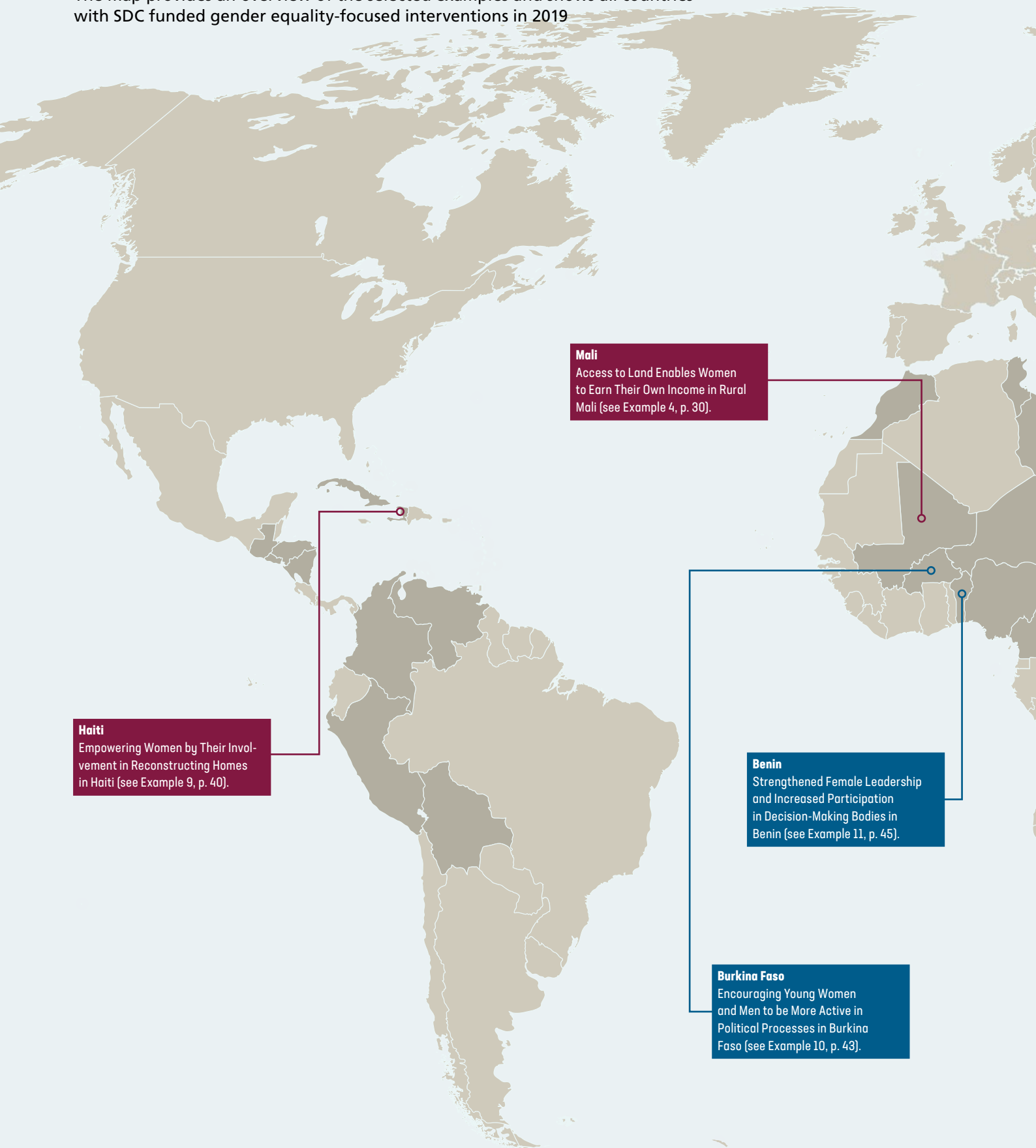
The herein presented project selection provides insights on the SDC's gender-related interventions and thereby achieved results. The featured projects represent the entire range of the SDC's engagement – thematically, geographically and with different partners. Some examples address gender equality as the main intervention purpose, while others focus on cross-cutting measures within their projects and programmes (transversal integration).

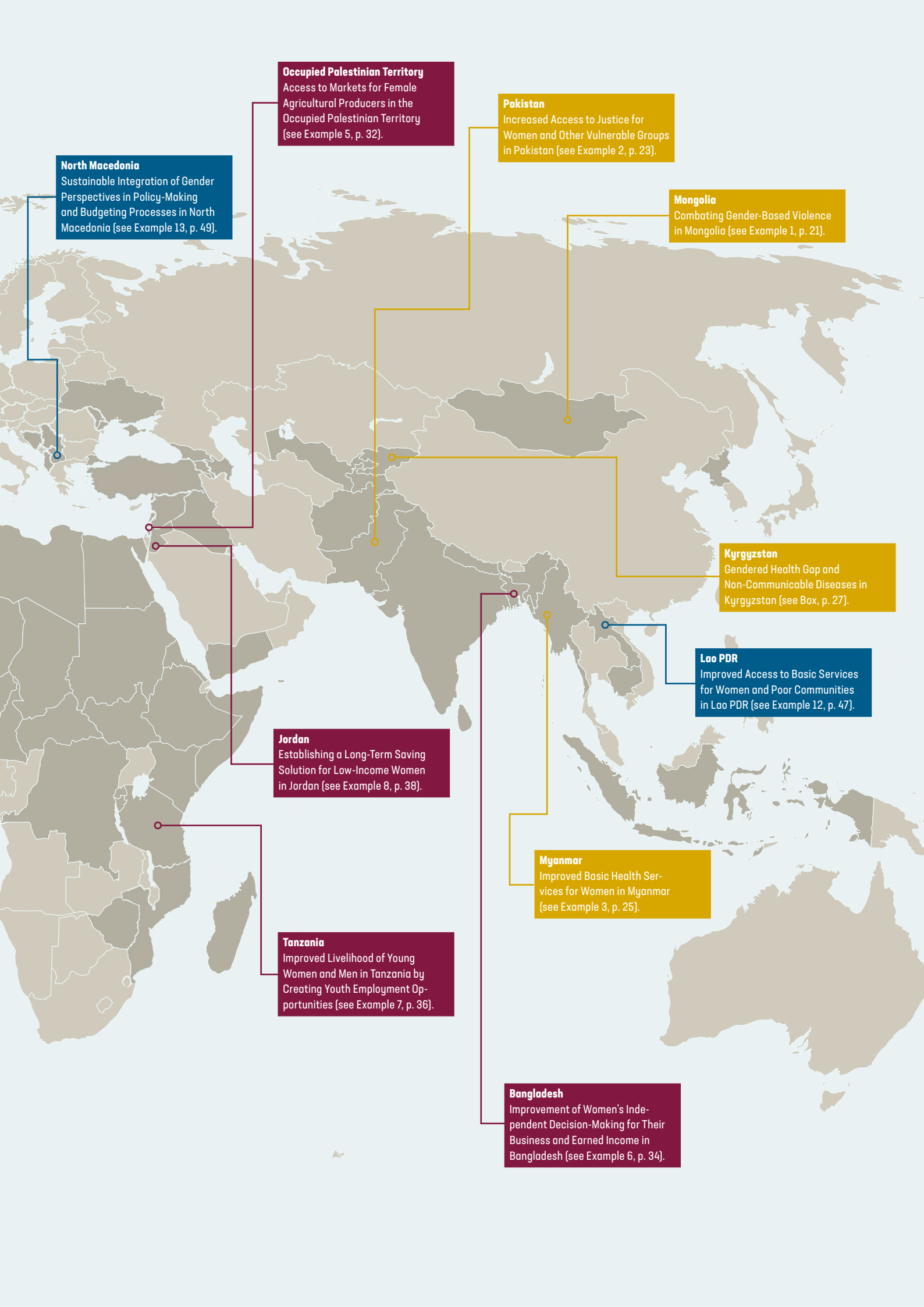
The 13 examples cover the three main intervention areas of the current Dispatch: 1) Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); 2) Women's economic empowerment (WEE); and 3) Women's political participation and empowerment (WPE). They illustrate the SDC and its partners' approaches, achievements, challenges, and some of their lessons learnt in promoting gender equality. The examples also give insights on how the interventions contribute to national gender data management systems.

The following section maps an overview of the selected projects and programmes within the SDC's priority countries and regions. The chapter then introduces each thematic priority and presents the accordingly sampled cases with key gender-related results and remaining challenges.

# Map of the SDC's Gender Equality-Focused Interventions

The map provides an overview of the selected examples and shows all countries with SDC funded gender equality-focused interventions in 2019





**North Macedonia**  
Sustainable Integration of Gender Perspectives in Policy-Making and Budgeting Processes in North Macedonia (see Example 13, p. 49).

**Occupied Palestinian Territory**  
Access to Markets for Female Agricultural Producers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (see Example 5, p. 32).

**Pakistan**  
Increased Access to Justice for Women and Other Vulnerable Groups in Pakistan (see Example 2, p. 23).

**Mongolia**  
Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia (see Example 1, p. 21).

**Kyrgyzstan**  
Gendered Health Gap and Non-Communicable Diseases in Kyrgyzstan (see Box, p. 27).

**Lao PDR**  
Improved Access to Basic Services for Women and Poor Communities in Lao PDR (see Example 12, p. 47).

**Jordan**  
Establishing a Long-Term Saving Solution for Low-Income Women in Jordan (see Example 8, p. 38).

**Myanmar**  
Improved Basic Health Services for Women in Myanmar (see Example 3, p. 25).

**Tanzania**  
Improved Livelihood of Young Women and Men in Tanzania by Creating Youth Employment Opportunities (see Example 7, p. 36).

**Bangladesh**  
Improvement of Women's Independent Decision-Making for Their Business and Earned Income in Bangladesh (see Example 6, p. 34).

# 4.1 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

## Why Action is Needed

Combatting sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) including protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of women is a priority area of the SDC. Despite global efforts to fight SGBV, it remains a severe issue and human rights violation in all world regions. The proportion of women who have suffered intimate partner violence at least once in their lifetime has not changed since 2012.<sup>35</sup> Notably, men and boys also suffer from SGBV, especially in times of conflict. A study on sexual violence in the Syria crisis estimates that 11 percent of all men and boys experienced an incident of sexual harm or harassment in the preceding three months, of whom none has accessed supporting services.<sup>36</sup>

A slight encouraging trend is shown by new data demonstrating that SGBV is generally less tolerated by women themselves than in previous years: the percentage of women worldwide who declared that spousal violence is acceptable under certain circumstances dropped from 37 percent in 2014 to 27 percent in 2018.<sup>37</sup> However, to this day, no country provides women with comprehensive legal protection against all forms of violence,<sup>38</sup> and 45 countries still have no laws protecting women and girls from any form of SGBV.<sup>39</sup> Progress in this regard has been too slow, which is explained by the fact that for a long time and in various societies until today, SGBV has been ignored and dealt with as a seemingly private concern.

Moreover, the deleterious consequences of SGBV are even more pronounced in countries with poor health services and infrastructure. Persisting patriarchal gender norms and legal provisions that limit women's control over their bodies further increase these consequences. New data show that, worldwide, 12 percent of women at reproductive age (15–49) report having unmet needs in the context of family planning. The lack of such services is most severe in Sub-Saharan Africa, where up to 24 percent of women suffer from insufficient family planning options. Furthermore, discriminatory laws threaten women's reproductive autonomy rights in case of non-desired pregnancy. Only 61 countries legally allow abortion on demand, while 108 countries impose conditional restrictions and 11 countries maintain complete bans on abortion.<sup>40</sup> In the past few years, the global awareness of SGBV and SRHR restrictions as severe issues to be addressed in development cooperation has created a broad commitment to their elimination, despite some global political backlashes. However, resource allocation to prevent and respond to these concerns has still not matched the scale of the problem to achieve a sustainable impact. Especially aus-

terity – the prevalent fiscal strategy in times of economic and financial crises – is an impediment to progress in this context, as the required services have been shown to be the first to fall prey to budget cuts.<sup>41</sup> In addition, data gaps continue to hamper the understanding of the full scope and prevalence of many forms of SGBV. For example, global data on widow abuse, abuse of elderly women, and “honour violence” are scarce. Due to methodological challenges, limitations of national surveys, and/or overall weak official statistical capacities, data disaggregated by social groups and contexts are poor with regard to SGBV.

## The SDC's Achievements

The SDC is strongly committed to combat SGBV. Interventions primarily focus on strengthening support and response capacities through quality services, improving access to justice, and enhancing prevention and reduction of violence. In addition, the SDC supports targeted SRHR interventions, either in bilateral health projects or with contributions to programmes of multilateral and international organisations.

In 2019, SDC interventions in several countries enabled 62'776 women, including many underage girls, and men subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence to receive psychological, medical, and/or legal support.

An institutional highlight in the thematic context of SGBV was the biannual meeting of all SDC Gender Focal Points in Berne, where lessons learnt from SGBV interventions in different countries were discussed. Examples from projects and programmes with a community-based psychosocial approach showed how SGBV can successfully be addressed in different contexts. A special workshop was devoted to the importance of engaging men and boys in SGBV interventions: participants shared proven practice and lessons learnt from their work with couples and with husbands as perpetrators and/or husbands of survivors of sexual violence. The workshop allowed to identify key elements for successful work with each group. In addition, the field visit on “Gender-Transformative Work with Men in Practice in Switzerland” provided staff members the possibility to learn about “männer.ch”, an umbrella entity of men's and fathers' organisations, and the Violence Counselling Centre (Fachstelle Gewalt) in Berne. Participants were sensitised on the most relevant advocacy issues in Switzerland, among others the legal regulation for paternity leave, and received insights into gender-transformative advisory work for perpetrators of violence.

The following examples will provide in-depth information on what the SDC and its partners have undertaken to reduce SGBV and strengthen SRHR, as well as to promote a more conducive justice system for women.

35 OECD (2019): SIGI 2019 Global Report.

36 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2017): [Sexual violence against men and boys in the Syria crisis.](#)

37 OECD (2019): SIGI 2019 Global Report.

38 Ibid.

39 UN Women (2019): [Families in a Changing World. Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020.](#)

40 OECD (2019): SIGI 2019 Global Report.

41 UN Women (2019): [Families in a Changing World. Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020.](#)

## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATORS

### Support and Response Capacity

This indicator is about access to comprehensive quality support services, including psychosocial, legal, and economic support. These services improve the well-being of persons who have experienced violence. This indicator also measures response capacities of service providers (government and civil society).

#### Indicator (ARI G1):

Number of persons (f/m) subjected to physical, sexual, or psychological violence having received psychological, medical, and/or legal support.

### Prevention and Reduction of Violence

To reduce acceptance of SGBV, sensitisation and awareness on SGBV and women's and human rights are crucial.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) sensitised on SGBV.

## Example 1: Gender-Principal Intervention

# Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia

Together with other development partners, the SDC supports the "Combating Gender-Based Violence" (CGBV) project in Mongolia. The project's overall aim is to strengthen national capacity to combat SGBV, particularly domestic violence. To achieve this, the project generates evidence on SGBV and domestic violence and sensitises right-holders and duty-bearers as well as the broader public on these issues. Furthermore, it strengthens comprehensive responses to SGBV and domestic violence survivors in pilot provinces and districts through "One Stop Service Centres" (OSSCs) run by teams with multidisciplinary backgrounds.

## Implementing Partners

The UNFPA is the SDC's implementing partner for this project. The project steering committee comprises the SDC, UNFPA, and both Mongolian Government and civil society representatives.

## Finances

The project runs from July 2016 through May 2020. The overall budget financed by the SDC amounts to CHF 5'553'090. In 2019, the SDC contributed CHF 679'948.

## Beneficiaries

During the project phase in 2019, 93'999 women and 61'959 men directly benefitted from the project's activities.

## Gender Analysis

### Increasing Numbers of SGBV Cases

Over the past two decades, Mongolia has experienced tremendous societal change as a result of political transition and economic transformation. However, not all members of society were able to equally reap the benefits, which led to economic instability and vulnerability in many households. The shifting context had significant effects on the country's socio-cultural norms, the dynamics of gender equality, and the phenomenon of SGBV and domestic violence in particular. A nationwide study conducted at the beginning of this project revealed that 58 percent of Mongolian women had experienced some form of intimate-partner violence at least once in their lifetime.

During the last decade, national laws addressing SGBV issues were adopted and a "National Programme against Domestic Violence" was introduced. Nevertheless, there is a general culture of impunity regarding domestic violence in Mongolia. Many survivors of SGBV, particularly of domestic violence, do not report crimes, as social norms discourage individuals from speaking out against perpetrators. Most people still regard SGBV as a private issue to be addressed within the family. Government service providers are starting to embrace their responsibilities but require increased capacity to provide integrated services in a gender-responsive way.



## Activities

### Supporting SGBV Survivors and Ensuring Data-Driven Policy-Making and Programming

In 2018, the project published the first national study on SGBV in Mongolia and launched a database system that collects information on SGBV incidences from all provinces and districts in real time. Especially the SGBV survey actively contributed to the national data system and shed light on the prevalence and consequences of as well as contributing factor to SGBV in the country. It also served as one of the primary data sources for the SDG indicator on violence against women and girls (SDG 5.2). Overall, this helped to track the progress of SDG implementation in the country. In 2019, the dissemination of the results of the national SGBV study continued: The National Statistics Office organised workshops advocating for local government investment in SGBV prevention and response. Moreover, the workshops ensured data-driven policy-making and programming. The CGBV project further supported several awareness-raising campaigns on the International Women's Day. In collaboration with other NGOs, the CGBV project launched a campaign to promote specific health issues, more involved relationships between fathers and their children, as well as further age-appropriate initiatives on SGBV to reach the youth.

To help the National Committee for Gender Equality (NCGE), the designated governmental agency to spearhead gender and SGBV sensitisation of duty-bearers, the project established a fully equipped training hall to conduct capacity building activities. To strengthen the response capacity of duty-bearers, training manuals and a curriculum at various universities were developed and taught. OSSCs were built to provide accommodation and free health, legal, psychological, and protection services to survivors. To improve and standardise service delivery in the OSSCs, the project developed trainings, manuals and guidelines on psychosocial counselling.

## Results

### Continuous Advocacy Work Ensures Professional Responses to SGBV

As a result of continuous advocacy work through the project, approximately CHF 233'000 were allocated to SGBV prevention and response by provincial and district governments. Most of this funding went into the establishment and operation of the OSSCs. In 2019, four new OSSCs were built. For the first eight months of 2019, there were a total of 1'961 visits to OSSCs. 588 cases were handled and followed up by the multi-disciplinary teams to ensure holistic service delivery.

In 2019, the awareness-raising campaigns and initiatives on SGBV of the project reached about 90'000 women and 60'000 men. They were sensitised on gender issues, SGBV, and healthy relationship habits with the aim of preventing SGBV altogether.

To strengthen capacity development of duty-bearers, the project conducted a training of trainers with 95 Gender Focal Points (80 women and 15 men) of governmental agencies and local government units. At the Journalism School and the Social Work Unit of the National University of Mongolia, a SGBV curriculum was developed and introduced. This curriculum was further adopted by 14 other universities offering social work degrees.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Missing Institutionalised Mechanism for SGBV Funding

In the project context, funding continues to be a major challenge. There is no institutionalised mechanism for resource allocation to SGBV, especially for the OSSCs, despite the fact that existing laws stipulate the legal obligation of the government to fund such initiatives. As such, there is a need to advocate for gender mainstreaming at all levels of government to ensure that national and local budgets are responsive to the issue of SGBV. To strengthen this effort, an international study tour was organised, during which important stakeholders were given insights into best practices to combat SGBV in the Philippines. Furthermore, to strengthen advocacy work for more state funding, the CGBV launched a study to calculate the economic cost of SGBV at the macro, household and individual levels.

### Sources

SDC (2019): Annual Report 2019. Success Story: One Stop Service Center in Zavkhan Province.

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Mongolia.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2016): Project Proposal Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia 2016–2019.

## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR

### Access to Justice

Access to functional and gender-responsive justice systems (informal and formal) contributes to claiming rights and combatting impunity.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) subjected to violence and discrimination who have access to functional (informal and formal) justice systems to claim their rights.

## Example 2: Gender-Significant Intervention

# Increased Access to Justice for Women and Other Vulnerable Groups in Pakistan

Since 2011, the SDC and its partners have contributed to increasing access to justice with the “Strengthening Rule of Law Programme” (SRLP) in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) region in Pakistan. The project’s efforts entail the continued stabilisation of the conflict-affected region through governmental support. The overall goal is to strengthen the legal system and the rule of law, with a particular focus lying on access to justice for women and the most vulnerable.

## Implementing Partner

The project is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, 4’736 women and 4’327 men benefitted from this intervention.

## Finances

SRLP is a multi-donor project. The project started its third phase (2019–2023). From October 2018 until December 2019, the SDC contributed CHF 392’600.

## Gender Analysis

### Inaccessible Formal and Informal Justice System for Women

A decade of conflict between the militants and the Pakistani security forces in KP resulted not only in heavy civilian losses but also in the substantial destruction of already weak justice and security institutions. While the province enjoys relative stability today, there is a dire need to strengthen its legal institutions and systems to re-establish people’s confidence in the justice system. Eventually, this may contribute to prevent the re-emergence of militancy. In practice, the formal judicial system of Pakistan remains inaccessible for the vast majority of the public. Particularly women, children, minorities, poor, or physically challenged persons are facing difficulties in getting timely and affordable justice services. Despite numerous international commitments and enabling national frameworks to improve women’s access to justice, Pakistan must undertake major reforms to guarantee access to justice for all and make dispensation of justice easier.



On top of that, gender and cultural barriers hinder women's access to both the formal and informal justice system. All parts of law enforcement and justice institutions are male-dominated and not responding to women's needs. The environments of courts, police stations, and informal justice fora are discouraging and not conducive to women.

## Activities

### Multiple Legal Empowerment Interventions

The project supports the government in its efforts to stabilise the KP region by strengthening the legal system on the side of both law enforcement and people's access to justice, especially for women and other vulnerable groups. The SRLP has been working on the legal empowerment of women by offering legal assistance through mobile "legal aid clinics", providing training and legal education to targeted groups, raising awareness on women's rights and available constitutional safeguards for women's protection. A highlight of the SRLP's activities was the organisation of a women lawyers' annual conference, which was attended by 117 female lawyers from KP. Additionally, a women lawyers' forum was formally launched with 130 female members from the province.

## Results

### Support of Institutions in the Installation of Gender-Responsive Measures

During the period 2018–2019, the programme has reached 112'505 women in selected districts through its multiple legal empowerment interventions. For example, police officers were trained in gender-responsive policing, supervision and communications skills, and crime scene investigation. Tangible results were achieved in the establishment of a gender-enabling environment, for example through female dormitories in training institutes, or the installation of gender desks at model police stations. Through these desks, the police is more responsive to gender-related issues brought by the public. Additionally, members of the Dispute Reso-

lution Councils (DRCs) were (re)-trained in dispute resolution techniques, human rights, and gender. By developing a gender strategy for law enforcement agencies and through the women lawyers' forum and its charter, institutions were supported to raise the number of female officers. Based on previous results, the programme will adopt a systemic approach to mainstream gender in the next phase.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Unattractive Environment for Female Lawyers

Accessing the female population in rural areas remained a challenge. Thus, the programme engaged with male community members first. Only winning men's trust enabled the SRLP to gradually reach women. To build trust within the communities, services by female lawyers and mobilisers were used to establish linkages with female community members.

Due to the male dominance, the legal profession remains unattractive for female law graduates. In few districts, the programme was able to establish justice institutions where women increasingly joined the legal profession. However, unless both the bar and bench environments are not made conducive to women, they will remain reluctant to join the profession. A lack of female lawyers will likely result in fear and hesitance among female litigants to pursue legal proceedings. Additionally, the operationalisation of 65 gender-responsive desks in the model police stations is challenging due to a smaller number of women in the rule of the law and justice sector, particularly in the police force.

### Sources

[SDC \(2018\): Project Database.](#)

[Strengthening Rule of Law in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.](#)

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Pakistan.

SDC (2019): Annual Progress Report September 2018 – August 2019. Strengthening Rule of Law Programme.

[UNDP \(n.d.\): Strengthening Rule of Law Programme.](#)



**GENDER REFERENCE INDICATORS**

**Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

Women and men are able to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights freely and have access to professional reproductive health care services to improve their health.

**Indicator (ARI H2):** Number of births attended by skilled health personnel.

**Decision-Making in the Management of Services and Resources**

Women equally participate and have equal influence in decision-making functions in the management of resources and services such as water, health, and education to have their voice heard.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) in decision-making functions in the management of resources and services (water, health, education/parents committees).

**Example 3: Gender-Significant Intervention**

# Improved Basic Health Services for Women in Myanmar

With the “Primary Health Care” (PHC) project, the SDC and its implementing partners contribute to improve access to good-quality basic health infrastructure and services for disadvantaged people in rural communities and conflict-affected townships in Kayin State, Myanmar. Furthermore, the project enables communities to improve health governance. A special focus of the project lies on maternal and child health as well as on women’s participation in local health committees.

## Implementing Partners

The implementing partners of this initiative are two consortia: The partners for Health Access in the Southeast of Myanmar (PHASE-M) are Save the Children (lead), Christian Aid, and Karen Baptist Convention. The Consortium for Health in Eastern Burma (CHEB) is formed by the Community Partners International (lead), the Karen Department of Health and Welfare, Burma Medical Association, and the Backpack Health Worker Team.

## Beneficiaries

In the period from January to June 2019, a total of 33’308 women and 12’426 men benefitted from this intervention.

## Finances

The project is running from March 2014 until October 2024. In 2019, the SDC contributed an amount of CHF 2’665’200.

## Gender Analysis

### Hierarchical Gender Relations Limit Access to Health Care Services

A country in transition, Myanmar has faced long-lasting civil war since the time of its independence in 1948, especially in Kayin State, where the project is operating. The power imbalance between women and men in Myanmar is massive, especially in rural areas where conservative gender



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relations prevail. The latter are deep-rooted and masked with a cultural or religious “coat”: the cultural belief that men have more “Bhone” (extraordinary inborn power just by being a man) than women is a significant demarcation in their relationship. Based on this narrative, women are generally confined to the private realm, while men are seen as breadwinners, active in the public sphere and in decision-making positions at all levels. Especially in rural areas, men inhibit the use of contraceptives. As a result, unwanted pregnancies and illegal abortions are a major cause of high maternal mortality. In addition to the fact that the health system in remote areas is precarious due to poor infrastructure and limited availability of services, men’s influence on women affects their health seeking behaviour. Additionally, decades of conflict and the prevailing hierarchical gender relations have exposed women to SGBV.

## Activities

### Providing Health Care Services to Women and Increasing Women’s Participation in Local Health Committees

To tackle the prevailing gender gaps in health matters in rural Kayin State, the PHC project developed a “gender-sensitive programming framework”. Further targeted activities are implemented in collaboration with its partner organisations. These activities are designed to provide primary health care services focusing on maternal and child health. Owing to this project, pregnant women receive antenatal care, safe delivery and postnatal care, as well as post-abortion support and family planning services. All women of reproductive age are provided with awareness raising services on SRHR. While focussing on women’s and children’s health, both consortia also target men’s involvement in the village’s health education sessions. The latter address family planning and SGBV, and include nutrition promotion activities, such as cooking demonstrations and competitions. Furthermore, both consortia strengthen women’s participation in “Village Health Committees” (VHCs) and “Township Health Working Groups” (THWGs) through capacity building workshops. The VHCs and THWGs play a key role in terms of health service accountability, community feedback mechanisms, and in providing assistance to emergency referrals.

To strengthen data collection, the PHC project contributes to partner projects and uses their results to develop the country’s Health Financing Strategy to reach Universal Health Coverage (UHC) under SDG 3 to ensure healthy lives and well-being at all ages. Therefore, regular meetings on data updates are held with the Ministry of Health and Sports.

## Results

### Improved Basic Health Care Services for Women and Increased Female Involvement at Local Level

For the period from January to June 2019, the PHC project provided primary health care and attended 610 emergency referral cases. Among them were 457 women and 153 men. A total of 9’566 people attended the health education sessions to strengthen their awareness on gender equality and health care: 7’206 were female and 2’360 were male. Regarding nutrition-promoting interventions, a total of 1’497 people (1’223 women and 274 men) took part in the nutrition-related activities. In 2019, the project contributed considerably to increase women’s involvement in local governance. At local level, 3’324 people were involved in the formation of VHCs, of which 1’553 were female and 1’771 were male. At the village level, the VHCs reached a 50 percent female participation rate in decision-making positions. Women’s participation thus increased from 30 to 50 percent compared to previous years.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Deeply Rooted Local Norms and Cultural Challenges

A major challenge in the project’s implementation are the deep-rooted health seeking practices of women and men’s negative influence on them, especially related to family planning issues. Through health education sessions and community involvement, the project contributes to strengthen women’s autonomy and voice. In addition, local norms and beliefs are still inhibiting women’s participation in leadership positions at local level. Therefore, through a leadership management training for VHCs and township health authorities, women’s capabilities are strengthened so as to prepare them to participate in local governance structures. In 2019, the opportunity rose to collaborate with other complementary projects deployed in the same project region. This resulted in combined efforts to promote gender equality in the area.

### Sources

Pansy Tun Thein (2015): *Gender Equality and Cultural Norms in Myanmar*. Yangon, Myanmar: Local Resource Centre (LRC).

SDC (2019): *Gender Sensitive Programming in Primary Health Care Project of Swiss Development Cooperation in Kawkaik Township, Myanmar (PHASE-M)*.

SDC (2019): *Primary Health Care Project in Myanmar, Phase 2, Semi-annual report: 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019*.

SDC (2019): *Questionnaire Status Report on Gender Equality 2019*. SDC Cooperation Office Myanmar.



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### **Gendered Health Gap and Non-Communicable Diseases in Kyrgyzstan**

The previous cases informed about interventions targeting women's health status. This case from Kyrgyzstan demonstrates that there are further health-related gender gaps. The aim of the "Effective Management and Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases" project in Kyrgyzstan is to improve the health and overall well-being of the Kyrgyz population in rural areas through equitable access to quality primary care services and the promotion of healthier lifestyles. Until this year, a special emphasis was put on reaching out to men as - in terms of epidemiology - they have a higher risk of cardiovascular-related, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) with high morbidity and early mortality rates. In addition, men are often reluctant to go to doctors for medical check-ups.

In 2019, the project focussed on preventive activities on NCDs using the competition "Be Responsible!" at schools. The main idea of the contest was the encouragement of adult men through schoolchildren in their families to visit primary health care facilities. As a result, over 80'000 men (approx. 20 percent of the male population aged 18+ years) in four Northern districts of the country visited health facilities. The medical check-up showed a high level of NCD risk factors: 23 percent had high blood pressure at the time of their visit, 35 percent suffered from pre-obesity, 27 percent were physically inactive, and 41 percent reported having an unbalanced diet.

A man from Talas region said after a check-up: "Now I know that I should go for a medical check-up more regularly. My son came to me and asked me to go to a medical consultation; he said he worried about my health. Suddenly, I realised I should take better care of myself. I need to do this for my children".

One of the main challenges during the implementation of this activity was setting up extended hours in health facilities for the men's consultations. This problem could be solved through a special order issued by the Ministry of Health.

#### **Sources**

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Kyrgyzstan.

## 4.2 Women's Economic Empowerment

### Why Action is Needed

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is central to realising women's rights and gender equality. Therefore, WEE is the second pillar of the Strategic Goal 7 of the current Dispatch and the SDC Gender Policy.

Women's economic potentials still face many constraints. At the core of gender inequalities in the economic and work sphere lie many deep-rooted notions and stereotypes around "women's work" versus "men's work". In many countries, women are still primarily allocated to reproductive (domestic and care) work in the private sphere, while men act as the main "breadwinners". To this day, women do most of the unpaid care work. Global data show that women do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men,<sup>42</sup> especially those living in a rural region, in a poorer household, being married, and having young children. The assignment of time-consuming, unpaid chores to women reflects and perpetuates their marginalised positions and deprives them from autonomy and economic independence. It is thus crucial to sensitise men to assume a fair share of unpaid care duties in order for women to be able to pursue paid economic activities.

That being said, while women are still responsible for most of the reproductive work, they also increasingly engage in various forms of waged labour, meaning they shoulder a "double burden". Data from 2019 show that in some regions growing numbers of women have joined the labour force (39 percent),<sup>43</sup> seizing opportunities to earn an income. However, when looking at the actual quality of their economic activities, the labour force participation of women is mostly confined to low-skilled, low-paid labour with precarious safety standards and poor or no social protection. Empirically, more than into formal employment women have been drawn into the informal economy to perform unregulated, seasonal or home-based work. Crucially, very high levels of female labour force participation rates in developing countries reflect economic distress and poverty – with great risks of exploitation and abuse.<sup>44</sup> Eventually, while there are increasing opportunities for women to gain an income, it should not be easily assumed that they are able to actually control it due to patriarchal intra-household dynamics.

Consequently, fostering WEE means creating better work opportunities for women and securing their access to and control of income and economic assets, including natural resources like land. The SIGI 2019 Global Report indicates that 164 countries explicitly recognise women's rights to own, use, and make decisions regarding land collaboratively and on equal terms with men. However, due to discriminatory customary laws, only 52 countries guarantee these rights both in law and practice.<sup>45</sup>

WEE further means to enable women to equally access and effectively use financial services and assets. Worldwide, the number of women owning a bank account has significantly increased.<sup>46</sup> However, women still face discrimination due to customary laws and practices that prevent them from assuming financial responsibilities or require men's approval for certain institutional proceedings, such as completing a loan application. In addition, access to formal financial services does not fully secure women's financial inclusion. Women need access to loans, insurances and training opportunities that address their specific needs and requirements.<sup>47</sup> And while advanced technologies are increasingly changing the economic and financial space, where new types of jobs are created and tailored financial products with low-level eligibility requirements are developed, evidence shows a critical gender gap related to equitable access to the internet and information and communication technology (ICT) devices. Therefore, many women are not able to equally engage in the digital economy and profit from new income opportunities or technological advances in the financial sphere.<sup>48</sup>

As in other areas, crucial data gaps challenge the measurement of progress within the WEE agenda. There is a severe lack of globally comparable time-series data on women's and men's ownership, control and use of land<sup>49</sup>, as well as on women's burden due to unpaid care work. Data are equally scarce when it comes to intra-household allocation of resources, as standard data collection methods take households rather than individuals as the unit of analysis. This solicits a false impression of a unified, harmonious decision-making process among household members. Moreover, data on women's real income and tax burden are missing.<sup>50</sup>

42 United Nations (2019): [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019](#).

43 *Ibid.*

44 International Labour Organisation (2018): [World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global Snapshot](#).

45 UN Women (2019): [Families in a Changing World. Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020](#).

46 *Ibid.*

47 OECD (2019): [SIGI 2019 Global Report](#).

48 *Ibid.*

49 UN Women (2019): [Families in a Changing World. Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020](#).

50 [Equal Measures 2030 \(2019\): Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality](#).

## The SDC's Achievements

The SDC continued its effort to promote WEE through a variety of strategic intervention lines, such as the promotion of access to and effective use of land, income generation and control, vocational training, and financial services. An important transversal issue in these different approaches is the reduction of women's unpaid care and domestic work.

A milestone worth mentioning was the biannual face-to-face meeting of all Gender Focal Points in Switzerland. During the meeting, participants explored three different thematic aspects on the path to WEE. An insightful session was devoted to the task of moving beyond women's participation in vocational training towards broader transformative change in their lives and in societies. One of the key learnings of this workshop was that vocational skills development projects need to be tailored to address the specific issues faced by women, such as unpaid care and household work. Engaging men to redistribute these duties is central to create space for women's education. The second workshop focused on the question of how to create a more gender-inclusive financial system. A key take-away message for participants was that financial inclusion projects should thoroughly consider demand and supply-side barriers faced by women. In addition, women need access to the whole range of financial services such as saving products, credit, insurance, payment services – and not just to loans. On the next day, during a field visit, participants received insights into the labour division between women and men in the Swiss agriculture sector. At the Inforama, a vocational training centre, participants deepened their knowledge on the gendered dimension of agricultural vocational trainings. The proportion of female students is highest in the training focusing on the organisation and management of the farm's household, while the proportion of male students is highest in the training targeting the production of crops and livestock breeding. Because of this division of labour, female farmers rarely receive a wage for their work and are poorly insured in old age. Generally, due to economic pressure, Swiss farms need to diversify their income sources. Women farmers play an important role as they significantly contribute to the farm's income through innovative diversification strategies, such as direct marketing approaches. Therefore, the group visited a farm implementing such a direct marketing approach. The female farmer sells farm products directly on the farm (self-picking of strawberries) and runs a small shop in the suburbs of Berne.

The following examples of interventions demonstrate the results accomplished by the SDC and its partners in 2019.

**Access to Natural  
Resources**

Women and men have equal access, ownership, and rights to natural resources such as land and water to improve their income and livelihood.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) who have established secure (individual, collective, customary) access to land.

**Example 4: Gender-Significant Intervention**

## Access to Land Enables Women to Earn Their Own Income in Rural Mali

The agricultural sector is one of the main pillars of the Malian economy, employing 80 percent of the population and contributing a third of the gross domestic product. The Government of Mali has thus targeted this sector as the driving force in its strategy for economic growth, poverty reduction, and food security. The local authorities are responsible for promoting the economic development of their entities. In recent years, the country's security crisis has negatively affected its economic growth rates. The SDC supports the "Programme for Local Economic Development and Food Security in the Koutiala Circle". The programme strives to improve food security and local economic development in the Koutiala Circle as part of good territorial governance. By strengthening women's access to land, the project supports WEE.

### Implementing Partners

The SDC's implementing partner in this project is the collective Miniankala Kafo. The collective is an association of 36 communes of Koutiala.

### Beneficiaries

In 2019, the collective reached 1'327 women and 194 men.

### Finances

The programme started in 2004 and ended in December 2019 with a fourth and last phase initiated in January 2016. The SDC contributed an overall amount of CHF 1'943'152. In 2019, the programme was supported with CHF 104'669.

### Gender Analysis

#### Restricted Land Rights of Women

In rural Mali, traditional values and practices greatly impact gender equality. The patriarchal system confers men the status as family heads and legitimises the gendered disparities in power and resources. In this context, practices like female genital mutilation, early marriage, and polygamy are widely spread. The unequal division of domestic labour between women and men as well as unbalanced gender roles in the production of food and commodities are common. Women play a major role in the agricultural sector and are responsible for subsistence farming, while men participate in both subsistence and commercial

agriculture. For Malian women, access to and control of resources are mediated through men. Women's agricultural contribution is largely unrecognised. Even if they have access to assets, they rarely exercise control over them. In addition, there is very limited capacity for women to engage in family decision-making. Similarly, female leadership within state structures is low, with persisting overrepresentation of men in elective institutions.

### Activities

#### Gain Access to and Control of Land in Order to Establish Own Sources of Income

Overall, the programme has a strong gender focus thanks to a specific gender action plan. A key element is the support of specific income generating activities for women. For example, the programme supported the cooperative UYELO in Kaniko, one of the first women's organisations in Koutiala Circle. They decided to increase the production of shea butter, an important source of income for women. They counteracted the disappearance of shea trees by planting and protecting shea plants. To do so, the women had to gain access to a land plot to plant the trees. The programme provided women's cooperatives with trainings in advocacy and sensitisation work as well as trainings on technical issues in the shea tree cultivation. After the internal instructing, members of the cooperatives themselves trained customary chiefs, village chiefs, landowners, and other women's groups on this issue. In several villages, awareness-raising activities took place to convey the benefits of women's access to and control over land in general and shea planting in particular. In addition, the programme

collected gender-disaggregated data and monitored the persisting inequalities through an own gender empowerment indicator.

## Results

### Access to Land Allowed Women's Own Income to Meet Household Needs

The support to the UYELO cooperative and its activities showed exciting results. After intense advocacy work by UYELO, male leaders and land-owners agreed to grant plots of land to various women's groups, including UYELO. The women established shea plantations in 27 villages across 18 communes of the circle. The cooperative has benefitted from three hectares of land and acquired legal ownership. A shea nursery was created. Women then replanted seedlings in the fields and sold shea seedlings to other producers. They used the substantial income to meet household needs such as food provisions, clothing, health care for themselves and their children, and education fees. Several members of UYELO were invited by other women's cooperatives to strengthen their own advocacy activities, creating a female support network. Through this mutual empowerment, several other cooperatives were able to negotiate and obtain land and start their own shea projects.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Struggle for Funding and Restricted Access to Finance for Women

The programme faced several challenges with other activities, a critical one being insufficient funding of the gender action plan by the municipalities despite women's commitment. Another obstacle was the restricted access to finance for women: the traditional banking system hinders women from accessing loans without their husband's permission. Furthermore, because of their activities, the UYELO women temporarily faced resistance, as men feared the current gender order would be disturbed.

#### Sources

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SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Mali.

[USAID Mali \(2012\): Gender Assessment.](#)



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## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR

### Self-Controlled Income

Women have access to and control over an increased income from agriculture, wage employment, or through entrepreneurship to improve their economic empowerment.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) with increased income from agriculture, wage employment, or entrepreneurship.

## Example 5: Gender-Significant Intervention

# Access to Markets for Female Agricultural Producers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Almost 25 percent of the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) live below the poverty line, with limitations regarding work, food security, safety, and health. In the OPT, the unemployment rate among adults lies at 27 percent, the majority comprising women – the highest rate in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Therefore, the SDC is supporting a programme called „Improved Access to Markets for Female and Male Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Small Scale Producers“. The intervention contributes to more resilient, sustainable, and equitable agricultural growth in the OPT. Focusing on private sector-led agriculture and agribusiness, this programme pursues systemic change in the agricultural sector and supports business modalities that favour small-scale producers. The project especially encourages women to lead own businesses.

## Implementing Partners

The SDC's implementing partner is Oxfam GB.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, the initiative reached 1'853 small-scale producers, of which 652 were women and 1'201 were men.

## Finances

The programme is currently in its third phase (January 2017 – November 2021). Since the programme start in May 2014, the SDC contributed to all three phases with a total amount of CHF 7'818'588 (37 percent of the total). Danida funds the remaining 63 percent. In 2019, the SDC allocated a contribution of CHF 570'000.



## Gender Analysis

### Social Barriers to Economic Empowerment

Oxfam has commissioned a study entitled “Making Agricultural Markets Better Work for Women in OPT” to explore the challenges women face in the agricultural sector. Opportunities for women regarding employment and entrepreneurship are rare. Women often work in the agriculture sector as unpaid workers or engage in low-productivity, informal food processing. This means that women have very limited access to income. Defined by social norms, women play a reproductive role. Therefore, their agricultural labour is perceived as a mere extension of domestic responsibilities and not fully recognised as productive work. The unequal division of labour underrates the role of women as producers as well as their expertise, skills, and decision-making capacities. Furthermore, women face other discriminations such as being underrepresented in farmers’ bodies, having restricted mobility, lack of training and limited or no access to resources such as land, seeds, and irrigation sources. Compared to men, women have less access to markets and microfinance institutions. Such disadvantages hinder women from contributing to the household’s food security and may lead to malnutrition.

### Activities

#### Encouraging Women to Lead Businesses

In 2019, the programme supported interventions in the grape and palm tree cultivation, where female farmers were enabled to expand and increase the quality of their products. Targeted actions took place, such as building a greenhouse for grapevine leaves or commissioning a feasibility study to explore further processing possibilities. In its outreach for the grape and palm interventions, Oxfam explored the reality of two groups of women: those who own land and female farmers without secured land titles. Furthermore, the intervention supported female-led start-ups. The programme actively reached out to female graduates’ associations and held introductory sessions on the application process. In addition, the programme collaborated with the “Aisha Association for Woman and Child Protection” to lead two introductory sessions with SGBV survivors and encourage them to apply for the start-up applications. In 2019, the programme also invested in the so-called “Go Professional” intervention aimed at building technical capacities of farmers, agronomists, technicians, and women in the agricultural and food-processing sector. Another intervention of the programme focused on leveraging the status of women confined to inferior roles within the value chain to gain competitive advantage. Collected project data is used for management purposes and shared in publications.

## Results

### Increase of Women’s Participation in Remunerated Work

Particularly in the grape and palm tree cultivation, the programme was able to encourage 18 percent of women from different areas to participate in the intervention. 11 to 14 percent of the programme beneficiaries were women, who improved the quality of grape by-products, as well as their marketing and sale strategy. By reaching out and explicitly encouraging women to participate in the application process for start-up support, women’s share among qualification finalists was 30 percent. Through the “Go Professional” intervention, women upgraded their skills to compete in the private sector. They were able to find internships in the private sector through job placement schemes. Additionally, women’s access to agricultural extension services was improved. Overall, the programme increased the recognition of women’s economic contribution in the grape and palm sector by scaling up their products, promoting knowledge and information sharing, increasing harvesting and post-harvesting skills, and supporting and leveraging women’s groups.

### Challenges and Opportunities

#### Struggle to Reach Out to Women

Reaching out to women, especially in the agriculture sector, remained one of the key challenges of the intervention. It was particularly difficult to ensure that the present women were not there as mere “tokens” without agency. To address this obstacle, Oxfam undertook a number of measures such as linking female beneficiaries with women’s rights organisations. A diversification of outreach strategies was necessary to identify different groups of women and encourage them to participate in the programme.

#### Sources

Oxfam (2017): Danida/SDC Joint Proposal Integrated Market Development Programme across the occupied Palestinian Territory.

[SDC \(2019\): Improved Access to Markets for Female and Male Fresh Fruits and Vegetable \(FFV\) Small Scale Producers. Online project database.](#)

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Occupied Palestinian Territory.

## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATORS

### Self-Controlled Income

Women have access and control over an increased income from agriculture, wage employment, or through entrepreneurship to improve their economic empowerment.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) with increased income in agriculture, wage employment, or entrepreneurship.

### Unpaid Care Work and Domestic Work

Women's and men's unpaid care and domestic workload is reduced and redistributed due to rural infrastructure development, i.e. water, electricity, energy efficiency, climate adaptation, labour saving technologies, or child-care services.

This indicator addresses women's lack of time as a critical factor impeding better access to education, economic activities, and political engagement.

**Indicator (ARI G2):** Average number of hours of unpaid domestic chores and care work reduced per day for women and men.

## Example 6: Gender-Significant Intervention

# Improvement of Women's Independent Decision-Making for Their Business and Earned Income in Bangladesh

Even though poverty in Bangladesh was reduced in the last two decades, the economic gains have not been evenly distributed across the country. Unemployment and inequalities are mounting particularly for women and people who live in remote areas. Since 2016, CARE Bangladesh has been implementing the SDC funded project „Shomosthi – Prosperity for the Poor and Disadvantaged“ through which women in particular are encouraged to increase their farming and cottage businesses by using improved technical and market services. The project also focuses on strengthening the voice and participation of women in local planning, their access to services in nutrition, health and education, and the reduction of unpaid care work.

## Implementing Partners

The main partner is CARE Bangladesh working with several local NGOs, private sector partners and the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources Technology of the Khulna University.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, the project reached 78'436 women and 78'436 men.

## Finances

The project spans over three phases from March 2016 until February 2028. The first phase will last through March 2020. For the inception and phase I, the SDC planned a total contribution of CHF 7'536'216, of which CHF 2'038'016 were budgeted for 2019.

## Gender Analysis

### Women's Limited Access to and Control Over Financial Income

Due to social and cultural norms as well as religious practices (Muslim and Hindu), women are secluded to their homes with limited access to services. Women's mobility is restricted, and they often need men's permission to leave their homes. Public spaces, including markets, are not open to women. Furthermore, their skills and knowledge are limited when it comes to operating a business. Patriarchal structures define men's role as the breadwinners,

whereas women are mostly assigned reproductive and care duties. Women often have restricted or no access to means of production, such as land and capital. This limits women's opportunities to find employment or to start a small business of their own. When working, they regularly have to hand over their earnings to their husbands or fathers. Women have restricted control over financial resources. Exceptionally, women are allowed to buy small items, for example for a child's education. With regard to household tasks, both women and men interpret them as women's responsibility. Collecting water, cooking, and taking care of children and other family members are exclusively women's duties.

## Activities

### Empowering Women by Increasing Their Access to Markets and Social Services

In order to increase women's access to markets and strengthen their participation and voice, the project includes various interventions targeting women and men. A special series of workshops was held for couples where husbands are not supportive to share household tasks in order to visualise the benefit of women's active participation in businesses and economic decision-making processes. Furthermore, the project influenced market committees, shop owners, and local government institutions to create so-called „women-safe market places“ in terms of security. At special events, the project encouraged entrepreneurs and producers to buy from and sell products directly to women. In order to increase access to capital for women, financial service providers were linked with female entrepre-

neers and encouraged to provide bank accounts and loans. The project simultaneously provided leadership, communication, and negotiation trainings to women. They were subsequently encouraged to participate in different strategic committees, such as local government or school committees.

The project does not actively contribute to the domestic data system of the Bureau of Statistics. However, it contributes to the CARE global statistics and the internal SDC reporting.

## Results

### Changing Perception of Women's Roles

According to the Annual Report 2018–2019, a positive shift took place for women from making only joint decisions with their husbands to making independent decisions regarding spending own income and buying major household assets. Moreover, it was found that women took relevant decisions for their businesses. They were increasingly bargaining with shop owners, communicating with different buyers to check prices, calculating business profits, and considering time to commute with return. Men recognised their wives' income contribution. Another positive outcome of the intervention was the significantly increased mobility of women.

The project supported ten women-safe markets in four regions to become functional. On average, women's participation rate in the market place increased from 10-15 percent to 30-40 percent. Women also engaged more in their neighbourhoods by attending school events and local government meetings. Thanks to the intervention, men acknowledged women's workload and supported their wives. Men increasingly started to execute household tasks such as washing clothes, cleaning household premises, taking care of elderly family members, and carrying drinking water to distant places. An unintended impact was the fact that domestic violence significantly decreased among those couples who were supporting each other in doing household chores and other care work. Owing to the intervention, 26 female members were playing an active role in the Market Management Committee, which enabled the inclusion of women's issues in the discussions.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Persisting Gender Stereotypes in the Private Sector and at Local Administration Level

The project faced two main challenges. First, it was difficult to promote women to move higher up the value chains, which is linked to the reality of a mainly profit-focused private sector. Moreover, women's inclusion is not high on the agenda of the private sector. Second, the Market Management Committee and local administration are not yet sensitised enough to support the women-safe market initiatives. In order to address these obstacles, the project initiated a dialogue with private sector actors, provided awareness-raising videos on different work areas at community level and arranged discussion sessions with the Market Management Committee to make it more functional.

### Sources

Care (2017): Gender Report for SDC-Shomoshti Project.

Care (2019): Annual Report April 2018 – March 2019.

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Bangladesh.

SDC (2019): Shomoshti Project. [Online project database.](#)



## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR

### Vocational Skills Development

Women have access to and attend vocational trainings, and gain an income as a result.

However, there are gender-specific obstacles in the transition from vocational skills training to job and income.

#### Indicator (ARI EV3):

Number of persons (f/m) who gained access to wage employment or entrepreneurship after attending vocational training.

## Example 7: Gender-Significant Intervention

# Improved Livelihood of Young Women and Men in Tanzania by Creating Youth Employment Opportunities

Tanzania's youth unemployment rate stands at 12 percent according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The job market outlook for Tanzania is still grim, mainly because of the lack of skilled workers and the mismatch between skills supply and demand. For this reason, the SDC supports the project "Opportunities for Youth Employment" (OYE) in Tanzania, implemented by the SNV Netherlands Development Organisation. OYE aims to improve the livelihoods of young women and men by developing and expanding their set of skills and by matching them with existing rural job markets and opportunities for self-employment in agribusiness, renewable energy, sanitation, and hygiene sectors in five regions of the Central Corridor.

## Implementing Partners

The SDC's implementing partner is the SNV Netherlands Development Organisation.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, a total of 1'279 youth (566 young women and 713 young men) entered employment. 1'179 youth-led enterprises (551 led by young women and 628 led by young men) were established.

## Finances

The project runs from July 2015 until December 2023. Phase I ended in September 2019 with a total budget of CHF 13'811'400. The SDC financed 44 percent of the total budget, 56 percent were covered by the co-funding institution Mastercard Foundation (MCF). For 2019, the SDC allocated CHF 1'020'000.

## Gender Analysis

### Pervasive Gender Stereotypes

The different roles and responsibilities of male and female rural youth are influenced by various socio-cultural dynamics, thus widening various gender gaps. In Tanzania, teenage pregnancy is high and disproportionately affects rural girls living in the country's Central Corridor. Early pregnancy inhibits the access to formal education, and young mothers are often banned from re-entering the formal education system. The private sector also shows a negative perception of youth as unreliable and lacking relevant skills and work ethics. The communities thus perceive youth as unable to contribute to family income. In Tanzania, inequalities translate into gendered division of labour at household level, on the farms, and in (family) businesses. Young women bear the main share of domestic and care-giving duties and engage as unpaid contributing workers in family businesses. This affects young women's time to pursue own income-generating activities. As a result, young women tend to opt for self-employment opportunities due to the flexible working hours and the proximity to their homes. Female-owned businesses are, on average, smaller in terms of employees, sales, and productivity



compared to their male competitors. They primarily operate within the agricultural, hospitality, petty trade, and garment sectors.

## Activities

### Creating Incentives to Increase Young Women's Participation in the Economy

The project has two goals: First, to increase young women's and men's (self-)employment, and second, to establish youth-led enterprises and generate income. Faced with the challenge of low female participation, a gender-sensitive recruitment enabled more female youth to benefit from the programme. This included information meetings and training activities for women only. Female OYE graduates were engaged as role models to inspire fellow female youth to join the project. OYE graduates informed parents and spouses on the project's objectives and trajectory to enhance transparency. To ensure wider coverage, OYE partnered with the BBC Media Action radio programme "Niambie", supported by the SDC, to share their stories on personal growth attained thanks to the OYE project. Since 2017, the project involved local partners through "result-based payment" contracts reflecting gender targets. A year later, each local partner was required to have a minimum of 60 percent female staff conducting training and coaching activities. SNV also invested in a gender value chain analysis-training for its implementing team and local partners to identify "female friendly" (self-)employment opportunities.

The project does not feed data to the central data collection system of the Tanzanian National Bureau of Statistics. However, project data contributes towards the (youth-)development targets set at the district and ward levels.

## Results

### Increased Female Enrolment, Participation and Completion Level

Female enrolment, participation, and completion levels increased to 47 percent, and 2'917 female youth secured gainful (self-)employment. A majority of them pursued a career in agriculture and increased their income 2.6 times compared to the income reported during the recruitment. Moreover, a total of 484 youth-led enterprises were established, of which 464 are still operational. Most of the enterprises have male and female members, but only 9 percent are female-led. The decision-making power is still disproportionately in male hands and continues to reflect the socio-cultural and economic gender gap. In addition, the project set up 284 saving and credit associations, comprising

4'260 youth in total. More than half of these young people were female (53 percent). Here, women took up leadership roles in the governance bodies, but there remains one key concern: Women are rarely appointed as the main "leader", for example as chairperson.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Care Duties and Restricted Mobility Hinder Young Women from Fully Participating

Due to domestic chores and care tasks, parents and spouses would often not allow young women to join the project. Another challenge was the participation in internships and market exposure visits that required traveling, often with an overnight stay. While female youth had the permission to join the programme, only a few of them were allowed to participate in these activities given the requirements. Additionally, some young women did not feel comfortable bringing their child(ren) along or leave them behind in the care of others. Furthermore, the gender pay gap in particular sectors impeded gender equality. Young women in the agriculture and the renewable energy sub-sectors earned 13 percent and 6 percent less, respectively, than their male competitors for the same job. That being said, female youth in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) sub-sectors earned 11 percent more than their male counterparts. However, only 3 percent of all youth entered employment in the WaSH sector.

### Sources

[ILO \(2019\): United Nations Joint Programme on Youth Employment, Tanzania.](#)

SDC (2019): Factsheet on Opportunities for Youth Employment.

SDC (2019) Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Tanzania.

[SDC \(2019\): Opportunities for Youth Employment. Online project database.](#)

## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR

### Financial Inclusion

Formal financial services such as a saving, insurance, loans or bank accounts are key elements for sustainable economic empowerment and asset building.

#### Indicator (ARI E2):

Number of persons (f/m) accessing a formal financial service (savings, insurance, loan, leasing, payment and transfer service, bank account).

## Example 8: Gender-Principal Intervention

# Establishing a Long-Term Saving Solution for Low-Income Women in Jordan

Research reveals an unfulfilled demand for saving options for low-income women. The SDC pursues most of its financial inclusion interventions in partnership with the private financial sector within the framework of the Swiss Capacity Building Facility (SCBF), a public-private development partnership. Through this technical assistance facility, the SDC supports the project “Innovative long-term saving solution in Jordan” in the development of a savings-linked insurance product (SLI) accessible for women through microfinance institutions.

## Implementing Partners

The Microfund for Women (MFW) is the beneficiary partner receiving technical assistance by Women’s World Banking.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, 1’629 women and 13 men benefitted from this intervention.

## Finances

This project ran from March 2016 until October 2019. The SDC contributed a total amount of CHF 179’312, of which CHF 29’826 were paid in 2019. The funding went into research, product design, pricing, process set up, and staff costs for a full-time project manager hired by MFW.

## Gender Analysis

### Lack of Formal Saving Products that Meet the Needs of Low-Income Women

Together with its network member and long-term partner MFW, Women’s World Banking identified disparities in access to and control over financial products between men and women in Jordan. This research suggests that, in general, women are the caretakers of their children and the home, while men are the primary income providers. However, it is in fact women who usually act as the financial managers of the household: this position makes women the primary savers of the family, although as non-traditional breadwinners they often lack decision-making authority over income. Nevertheless, research found that the majority of women were in control of their savings. Most husbands did not care about the specifics of their wives’ savings,

which is probably linked to the fact that the saving-purposes tend to relate to women’s role as family caregivers. Therefore, most women autonomously decided how to use them.

Statistics from 2017 elaborated by the World Bank’s financial inclusion study (FINDEX) in Jordan show a critical demand-supply gap for savings within formal institutions. Current Jordanian regulations prohibit microfinance institutions from offering saving deposits to clients. Consequently, there are very limited formal saving products available on the market that meet the needs of the low-income segment, especially those of women. The numbers display clear gender differences in access to saving options, although evidence shows that women have the higher willingness to save. On top of that, the FINDEX-study revealed that women express low levels of trust with banks. Consequently, women tend to continue saving at home. However, these funds get exhausted quickly to pay for regular expenses such as rent, electricity bills, and unplanned expenses like health emergencies.

## Activities

### Design of a SLI-Product

Next to credits and loans, women’s access to formal savings is vital for WEE. This project designed and developed a long-term saving option for low-income women. In order to do this, MFW came up with an innovative solution working around national regulatory constraints: they developed a product with both a saving and a microinsurance component. The saving option is linked to a microinsurance product which is delivered and managed through a formal financial institution. Consequently, while the saving component is made accessible to clients through microfinance institutions, the insurance-link prevents the latter to actually keep the saving – in accordance with the law.



© Microfund for Women Jordan

The product works through a monthly premium that the insurance policyholder pays as her savings deposit. MFW will collect the premium and transfer it to the local insurance partner on a monthly basis. After a number of years agreed upon by the client, she will receive not only the total amount she has “saved” over time, but also an “interest” that results from the profits of the insurer investing in the deposit.

Main activities related to the product development were completed in 2016 and 2017. The launch at the country level took place in 2019. The SDC supported MFW by financing the employment of a full-time project manager and in-house capacity building during one year. Women’s World Banking provided capacity building for MFW through training interventions and support of the dedicated project manager to drive product enrolment. Through the creation of client types like young professional woman, woman with children, or older women, the sales process was streamlined to address objections and increase the effectiveness.

The project does not actively contribute to the domestic data collection system, although the numbers are reported to the national regulator.

## Results

### Launch of SLI-Product and Capacity Building

The project is the first of its kind. The savings-linked insurance product was designed bearing in mind women’s needs and their saving behaviour. Jordanian low-income women can often only save small amounts and prefer to save in risk-free instruments so that their capital is protected. Through saving-linked insurance, clients are now having a way to

effectively save in a formal institution by building assets in a structured and secure manner. With the help of provided funds and the support of Women’s World Banking, MFW was able to train all of their salesforce (357 loan officers) and offer the product to a targeted segment of 20 percent of all loan takers (which represents roughly 30’000 customers).

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Little Buy-In from Staff

MFW was required to obtain an insurance intermediary license. The project was almost interrupted by the delay in the unanticipated product approval process and the loss of momentum at the institutional level, which required retraining of staff.

Additionally, change management was a challenge at all levels of the project. MFW is a microfinance institution. At first, the staff felt very uncomfortable with the idea of selling a savings programme. They were convinced of “giving money” as a business to their customers, whereas savings meant they had to “take money” from their customers. Therefore, there was little buy-in from the staff.

Thirdly, the lack of a dedicated project manager posed a serious challenge. This required Women’s World Banking hiring a local project manager with the financial support of SCBF.

### Sources

[SCBF \(2019\): Product up-scaling support – Factsheet.](#)

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Jordan.

[World Bank Group \(2017\): The Global Findex Database. Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution.](#)

## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR

### Unpaid Care Work and Domestic Work

Women's and men's unpaid care and domestic workload is reduced and redistributed due to rural infrastructure development, such as water, electricity, energy efficiency, climate adaptation, labour saving technologies or childcare services. This indicator addresses the reduction of time poverty of women as critical factor for better access to education, economic activities, and political engagement.

#### Indicator (ARI G2):

Average number of hours of unpaid domestic chores and care work reduced per day for women (and men).

## Example 9: Gender-Significant Intervention

# Empowering Women by Their Involvement in Reconstructing Homes in Haiti

On 4 October 2016, hurricane "Matthew" – the strongest hurricane in a decade – hit Haiti and devastated the island, especially the Southwest. Humanitarian crises are not gender-neutral: In contexts where poverty and discriminatory gender norms exist, women and girls are often the most affected by the crisis. Therefore, the SDC started a reconstruction project called "Projet d'Appui à la Reconstruction de l'Habitat avec Formation dans le Sud" (PARHAFS) in 2018. The project intends to strengthen the resilience of the population affected by the hurricane in Haiti through physical rehabilitation as well as reconstruction of individual housing and collective shelters. At the same time, the project focuses on improving sustainable training on house building, supervising the construction of the homes, and developing emergency capacities in preparedness and response in the face of natural disasters.

### Implementing Partners

The SDC implements the project directly.

### Finances

The project runs from July 2018 to June 2021 with a budget of CHF 7'130'000. In 2019, the SDC allocated CHF 1'860'000.

### Beneficiaries

In 2019, the project reached 1'693 women and 1'605 men. In total, 222 houses were reconstructed of which 113 were women-headed households.





## Gender Analysis

### “Double Burden” for Women-Headed Households

According to a report by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Women’s Rights in Haiti, 2.4 million people were affected by the hurricane “Matthew”. It impaired more than 150’000 female-headed households. A significant part of the male population left the rural areas in search of work in urban centres, while women remained behind taking over the households. The representation of women in agriculture and stock farming in Haiti is relatively low. However, women are overrepresented in the informal sector, especially in retail trade. They try to sell agricultural products on regional markets in order to generate income. In addition to the lack of access to land and resources, traditional norms relegating women to reproductive duties make it more difficult for women to generate income. This means that women, especially if they handle a household on their own, carry a “double burden” by shouldering both paid and unpaid work. These gender roles are equally reflected in Haiti’s political participation, where the national parliament scores a female share of only 3 percent. Politics are strongly seen as male business, and women are excluded from decision-making processes. Given Haiti’s weak statistical capacities, very few reliable and systematic gender-disaggregated data exists.

## Activities

### Enabling Women-Headed Households to Rebuild Their Homes

The project defined beneficiary selection criteria in particular for single-parent households with large families, including a large number of female-headed households. As households had to organise and manage the reconstruction work on their own, women heading households assumed decision-making authority. The families received vouchers for services and building material to reconstruct their homes. The reconstruction work was supported by training modules explaining the different stages of house building. Furthermore, local steering committees accompanied the reconstruction work. Although gender parity in the composition of the committees was reached only rarely, efforts were made to ensure at least the presence of different groups of women through elected female representatives. The project also carefully chose the time for these meetings so that women were able to attend. As fetching water is essentially women’s work, and seeing that many drinking water sources are located far from residential areas, some of them spend more than two hours a day walking. This leaves them with little time left for political and community work. Since Haiti benefits

from more or less regular rainfall, households were advised to equip houses with rainwater collection systems. Additionally, the project raised awareness on building water facilities and sensitised the households on hygiene practices.

The project does not foresee a system to share collected project data with the national government.

## Results

### Infrastructure Reduced and Redistributed the Time and Effort Women Spend on Unpaid Care Work

Having a clean house provides a safe space and reduces families’ dependency on humanitarian organisations to provide shelter. The experience of being able to oversee the construction of one’s own house strengthens self-confidence, self-respect, and respect from neighbours and the village community. Being in charge of the reconstruction therefore empowered women and their decision-making authority. Furthermore, the integration of water collection facilities for the households gave women more time for income-generating activities. The facilities also turned out to be a relief for children who were sent to fetch water. They equally gained more time to do their homework and to study. Lastly, the opportunity to improve personal hygiene through new facilities and the construction of latrines reduced illnesses and offered additional protection.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Restoring Sustainable Livelihood for Women

Scarce financial resources are the biggest challenge, in particular for women-headed households. Many families, especially single mothers, face security issues and have their basic needs unmet. Housing construction interventions must always be accompanied by project activities that enable families to generate additional income. Another challenge was the shutdown of formerly established women’s groups. Before hurricane “Matthew”, several dozens of women’s groups were active in the project area. They formed small production groups and financed themselves with small loans. These women’s groups were unable to repay their loans after the hurricane, and thus ceased their activities.

### Sources

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Haiti.

SDC (2018): PARHAFS ProDoc.

## 4.3 Women's Political Participation

### Why Action is Needed

Women's political participation is the third key priority for the SDC and its partners in their effort to strengthen gender equality and inclusive sustainable development. In the political sphere, women still face several constraints in terms of participation and decision-making at both national and local levels. Though global figures have slightly increased, they show that women are underrepresented in many legislative bodies. In 2019, on average, 24.3 percent of all national parliamentarians worldwide were women, meaning there has been an increase of 5 percentage points since 2010.<sup>51</sup> Especially in countries with legislated gender quotas, more women were elected at the national and local level: in such countries, women occupy an average of 26 percent of parliamentary seats, compared to 22 percent in countries with no quota.<sup>52</sup> Higher levels of female representation in national parliaments tend to correlate with higher female representation in local governments. Generally, however, persisting structural barriers and discriminatory practices limit women's options to actively participate in the political sphere. Actual capacity gaps mean that women are less likely than men to dispose of the education, networks, resources, and time needed to become effective leaders in the first place. And even if women prove their abilities, they are often not able to equally exercise their right to participate in democratic governance when facing male opposition. Widespread negative attitudes towards women as political and community leaders impede their participation in politics. Many people – including women – still associate political leadership with men and traditional notions of masculinity, and are thus not supportive of female candidacies. That being said, specific measures to enhance women's political participation and voice only tend to have an actual impact if they are linked to broader efforts to reinforce women's positions in society at large.

Women's unequal representation in government and political decision-making processes leads to a likely neglect of their needs and interests, resulting in policies, political programmes, and budget plans that tend to be gender-blind. A strategic approach to address this imbalance is the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). GRB links policy and legal requirements for gender equality with actual resource allocations. Although there has been progress in the implementation of gender budgeting, significant gaps remain: Many countries have yet to establish a comprehensive system to track allocations for gender equality. An analysis in 2018 demonstrates that out of 69 countries, only 13 countries (19 percent) fully introduced GRB, while 41 countries (59 percent) gradually approached the requirements towards effective GRB.<sup>53</sup>

To monitor progress and fully understand what hinders women's equal political participation and decision-making, regularly collected, high-quality gender data are needed.

Assessments of such data availability suggest that there is a lack of gender-disaggregated voter data to track how women are engaged within voting processes. In addition, there is little data on women's leadership at local level, on violence against women in politics, and on male engagement in improving women's political participation. Notably, there is almost no data that would allow for an intersectional analysis of women's political participation.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, limitations are caused by weak technical capacity, financial constraints within national statistics systems, inconsistent data collection and production standards (e.g. in terms of disaggregation), limited dissemination, and the lack of coordination between data producers within countries, including international cooperation actors.<sup>55</sup>

### The SDC's Achievements

The SDC pays special attention to women's political participation and representation, gender-responsive procedures in national and local governance as well as to women's inclusion in peace and state-building processes.

In the context of this strategic priority, during a series of workshops at the three-day face-to-face meeting in Berne, the SDC Gender Focal Points extensively discussed how to ensure that women's political participation is translated into actual influence in decision-shaping. One of the key take-away messages was that the support by men within political parties but also at family level, as husbands and fathers, strengthens women's effective influence. Furthermore, the participants explored more in-depth how public policies and expenditure trigger positive change towards gender equality and social inclusion. Specifically, they discussed good practices to empower women and socially excluded groups to participate in budgetary decision-making processes in local level governance. They also looked at good examples of improved public policies and services implemented due to GRB. During a field visit, participants were familiarised with women's representation and influence at local and national administrative level in the Swiss federal system. The attendees visited the municipality of Köniz and learned about gender issues in communal politics and how related challenges are mitigated. Moreover, participants were introduced to the Swiss campaign "Helvetia is calling", aimed at increasing the number of women candidates for national parliament and executive bodies in the elections of October 2019. The campaign actively mobilised and coached female candidates – with great success: women's representation in national parliament grew from 32 to 42 percent.<sup>56</sup>

The following examples of interventions in the strategic area of women's political participation and empowerment demonstrate various activities and results of the SDC and its partners in 2019.

51 United Nations (2019): The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019.

52 OECD (2019): SIGI 2019 Global Report.

53 United Nations (2019): The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019.

54 Roland, Jessica, *Women Deliver (2019): To close the gender gap, we first need to properly measure it.*

55 UN Women (2018): *Making women and girls visible: Gender data gaps and why they matter. Issue Brief.*

56 Eidgenössische Kommission für Frauenfragen (2019): *Mehr Frauen im Bundeshaus.*

**GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR**

**Political Participation and Decision-Making**  
Women equally participate in and have equal influence on local governance and politics. 30 percent representation is an indication for having voice and influence.

**Indicator (ARI G3):**  
Number of municipal governments with at least 30 percent representation of women (or number of women and men in local governments).

**Example 10: Gender-Significant Intervention**

# Encouraging Young Women and Men to Be More Active in Political Processes in Burkina Faso

In 2015, Burkina Faso experienced a popular uprising followed by elections and a democratic transition. The country belongs to the poorest countries in the region. For young people, who make up 70 percent of the total population, there are limited social, economic, and political opportunities. Given the lack of information and active participation by young women and men, the SDC decided to fund the project "Studio Yafa", implemented by the Fondation Hirondelle. The intervention trains and supervises Burkinabe journalists to produce weekly radio magazines as well as videos and articles for social media. On the one hand, this informs young women and men on the political context and social issues. On the other hand, it enables young people to become more active in democratic and development processes. "Studio Yafa" equally addresses older generations to create common understanding and enable intergenerational dialogue.

### Implementing Partners

The SDC's implementing partner is the Fondation Hirondelle – Media For Peace and Human Dignity.

### Finances

The first phase of the project started in January 2019 and will end in December 2021. The total project budget amounts to CHF 1'210'000 and will be deployed in four phases until 2031. In 2019, the SDC allocated CHF 320'000.

### Beneficiaries

In 2019, 81 women and 148 men directly benefitted from this intervention.



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## Gender Analysis

### Insufficient Communication to Value the Role and Contribution of Women

Even though policies and programmes promoting gender equality are in place across Burkina Faso, discriminatory social norms perpetuate gender inequalities. The country has made good progress in ensuring equal access to education. However, girls often face difficulties staying in school compared to boys. This is true for basic education as well as for vocational training. Since 2017, security threats have affected girls' and boys' access to school in the Sahel, North Central, and North. By August 2019, more than 2'000 schools were closed affecting 330'000 students, of whom 48 percent were girls. Women and girls face discrimination when it comes to social, economic and political opportunities. Almost 50 percent of all women are married before the age of 18. Unpaid care work is perceived as women's responsibility. Even though 26 percent of women are farmers, only few of them own the land they work on. Women have a lower participation rate in the labour market than men. Women also have less access to formal financial institutions compared to men. Regarding political representation, Burkinabe women are underrepresented with less than 20 percent in government. Young people often lack information on crucial topics like jobs, political context, and the security situation. Despite the freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution, journalists are under increasing pressure. According to a European study, more and more women are taking on the profession as journalists (25 percent in 2016 compared to 15 percent in 2013). Despite this increase, it is rare for women to reach management positions: only 8.5 percent of these women accessed positions of responsibility. The overall public presence of women is low, and there is insufficient communication on the value and contribution of women to political, economic, cultural, and social development.

## Activities

### Informing and Promoting Dialogue with Young Women and Men

The "Studio Yafa", the new multimedia project for young women and men in Burkina Faso, officially opened in March 2019. Gender balance of the staff was essential, particularly the editorial staff, because it led to the thematic proposal of reports that addressed gender issues. This directly influenced the productions. The young team of journalists and professional translators was trained and produced reports in form of short magazines and other media outlets. The content also intended to reduce gender inequalities in the media. With a network of 15 media partners, the project was broadcasted

throughout the country to reach as many Burkinabe citizens as possible.

Fondation Hironnelle plans to register its programme at the Ministry in charge of territorial administration and will participate in the bi-annual review committees proposed by the government. This is an opportunity to share experience and data with the government.

## Results

### Encouraging Women's Voices to Be Heard

"Studio Yafa's" products have been published on social media (Facebook and Twitter pages) and later on its own web page. From 4 March to 16 August 2019, a total of 481 radio programmes (in five local languages other than French) were broadcasted on 21 stations. In the radio debates (Ya' Débats), 83 percent of the participants were men and 17 percent were women. Since the beginning of the project, the radio magazines interviewed 45 percent men and 26 percent women under the age of 35 years. The interviewees older than 35 years included 26 percent men and 3 percent women. The lower participation of women is explained, among others, by the fact that journalists had difficulties to identify women from certain socio-professional categories of interest. Other reasons involve the lack of women's confidence to speak out in public or refusals of husbands to let their wives express themselves in the media. Nevertheless, "Studio Yafa" journalists are always encouraged to seek out women's voices in their reports and to show, through examples from everyday life, how some women from modest backgrounds have succeeded in their social ascension and/or their life project.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Prejudice and Inequality Remain

The Burkinabe context is still marked by strong gender prejudices and inequalities, especially in rural areas. A challenge of the "Studio Yafa" programme, in addition to increasing awareness and advocacy for gender equality, remains the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data. The "Studio Yafa" has appointed a Gender Focal Point, who is working to improve the programme's data monitoring and processing mechanism.

### Sources

Fondation Hironnelle (2019): Studio Yafa Interim Report November 2018 – June 2019.

OECD (2018): [Burkina Faso still has a long way to go on gender equality. Maps & Facts, No. 63, January 2018.](#)

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Burkina Faso.

**GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR**

**Political Participation and Decision-Making**

Women equally participate and have equal influence in local governance and politics.

30 percent female representation is an indication for having voice and influence.

**Indicator (ARI G3):**

Number of municipal governments with at least 30 percent representation of women (or number of women and men in local governments).

**Example 11: Gender-Principal Intervention**

# Strengthened Female Leadership and Increased Participation in Decision-Making Bodies in Benin

Women’s representation in decision-making bodies in Benin is low both in numbers and quality. Consequently, due to underrepresentation, women’s needs and issues are not reflected in policies and discussions. In order to contribute to the government’s and national organisations’ efforts to reduce gender inequalities of social, cultural, legal, and economic nature, the SDC funded the “Programme de Renforcement des Capacités d’Actions des Femmes” (RECAFEM). A key intervention of the programme is strengthening female capacity and increasing women’s participation in decision-making bodies.

## Implementing Partners

The RECAFEM programme works with different partners such as CARE International, the consortium of two local partners Wanep–Rifonga and BAANI, the NGO initiative YOD, and the Ministry of Social Affairs (Gender Coordination).

## Finances

The programme lasted from February 2003 until December 2019. The last and fourth phase, budgeted with CHF 3’800’000, began in June 2015. In 2019, the SDC allocated CHF 535’000.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, the intervention reached 76’915 women and 55’775 men.

## Gender Analysis

### Structural Obstacles for Women to Participate in Decision-Making Bodies

In Benin, women face deep-rooted structural obstacles on a daily basis: They involve, for instance, the unequal distribution of resources, power, and wealth, coupled with patriarchal institutions and social norms that perpetuate inequalities. Women are often absent in the country’s various decision-making bodies, holding roughly 25 percent of key positions. At the national level, only 63 women were elected as communal councillors out of 1’530 appointees. In the National Assembly, only 8 percent of the members are women. In the current government, 4 out of 22 ministers are female. A study conducted by the initiative YOD on WEE and women’s impact on decision-making processes showed that women’s economic contribution to household operating expenses represents about 74.7 percent of household management costs. However, women’s participation in household and community decision-making remains low. Polygamy is dominant, with a 75 percent prevalence in the areas under study. Furthermore, illiteracy remains widespread, with a rate of 75 percent among women. Female employment plays out in agriculture, commerce, handicrafts, and family assistance. As almost half of the women do not get paid for their economic occupation, access to and control over resources remain major concerns.



## Activities

### Strengthening Women's Capacities and Enabling an Inclusive Political Environment

The SDC's programme RECAFEM is a gender-principal programme. It mainly delivers capacity building to reduce the pronounced gender gaps in the economic, social, cultural, and decision-making spheres. One intervention of the programme works towards the creation of a social and political environment that is favourable to the emergence of women's leadership. At the same time, the programme helps to foster women's leadership within grassroots associations and political parties to improve women's access to elective and nominative positions. In 2019, RECAFEM built capacities by coaching young female leaders. In order to raise communal awareness on gender issues and to inform on the programmes' events, different activities were organised such as radio programmes and television debates on gender-sensitive topics. RECAFEM also sensitised opinion leaders, spouses, and close relatives of beneficiaries to support women in their activities linked to the intervention. Advocacy efforts on how to nominate and position women in decision-making bodies involved political leaders, governmental actors, and local authorities.

At the beginning of the programme, data were contributed to the official database of the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, due to technical issues in the fourth phase, the programme supported a new database, which is currently being tested. Programme data are directly collected by partners in the field as part of the programme's monitoring and evaluation system.

## Results

### Strong Female Leadership

Due to the programme's efforts at the end of 2018, the number of registered women in political parties increased from 33 percent to 67 percent in the five Northern departments. Strengthening the political leadership of young women participating in the programme was reflected in an increase of participants who implemented own initiatives in their

communities. The visibility of female candidates in their communities also improved. Women who participated in capacity building programmes indicated that they had clear visions for their future and stronger political ambitions. Through testimonies, more than three quarters of the trained women showed increased self-confidence and self-esteem. Moreover, they were able to take action in public. Through the programmes, women equally improved their communication with their spouses and other community members, and indicated to better manage conflicts in their households. 99 percent of the spouses and close relatives of the women in the programme were engaged in actions in favour of their political leadership. These results indicate that stereotypes and other constraints to the emergence of women's leadership were reduced in the targeted community.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Structural Obstacles Inhibiting Women to Engage in Decision-Making Bodies

During the implementation of the programme, various challenges had to be tackled. Even though the programme included engaging men by raising their awareness, the resistance of some men to allow their wives to enter politics persisted. RECAFEM invested in advocacy and exchange with political parties to build their capacities on gender. However, due to a lack of supportive policies for women, such as quotas, it remained difficult to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies. Furthermore, with Benin's new partisan system that reorganises parties in blocs, the current political landscape is not yet well understood by many young women. For this reason, trainings on the partisan system and the new electoral code are planned for young committed female leaders and their coaches alike.

### Sources

BAANI (2019): Capitalization document on the achievements of the Awakening and Reinforcement of Women's Leadership Project.

SDC (2019): RECAFEM programme final evaluation.

[SDC \(2019\): RECAFEM programme. Online project database.](#)

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Benin.

**GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR**

**Decision-Making in the Management of Services and Resources**

Women equally participate and have equal influence in decision-making functions in the management of resources and services such as water, health, and education.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (f/m) in decision-making functions in the management of resources and services (water, health, education/parents committees).

**Example 12: Gender-Significant Intervention**

# Improved Access to Basic Services for Women and Poor Communities in Lao PDR

In Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), remote communities and especially women have limited access to basic services. Female voices are still underrepresented at local and community level. The “Poverty Reduction Fund” project (PRF) assists communities in the development of infrastructure to gain access to basic services such as water, health, and education. Capacity building fosters the villagers’ empowerment to manage their own public investment planning. In doing so, the project focuses especially on the participation of women and ethnic minority groups in decision-making processes. The PRF project finances sub-grants for eligible sub-projects as identified by the community, provides technical consulting and advising, and finances resulting project management costs at the central level.

## Implementing Partners

The SDC’s implementing partners are the World Bank and the Government of Lao PDR.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, a total of 114’798 women and 119’491 men have directly benefitted from the intervention. 84 percent of the 234’289 beneficiaries were from ethnic minority groups.

## Finances

The project started in January 2003 and runs until June 2024. The third phase covers the period 2017–2020 with a total amount of CHF 17’000’000. Up to 2019, the SDC has contributed a total of CHF 11’035’100.

## Gender Analysis

### Persisting Gender Gaps in Health, Education, Economy, and Agency

Since the introduction of economic reforms in the mid-1980s, strong growth and development have lifted thousands of women and men out of poverty, changing their traditional ways of life. However, especially women and ethnic minority groups living in remote areas have not equally benefitted from development progress. While antenatal and maternal health care has improved in the last decade, maternal mortality and malnutrition rates remain high. Progress was made in education: girls’ primary school enrolment rates have increased, as well as the literacy rates among adult women. Despite these improvements, fewer girls are enrolled at all school levels than boys. Both women and men are benefitting from easier access to water and sanitation, but this access varies depending on the loca-



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tion. In places with only limited access, the burden of water collection heavily falls on women and girls who are responsible for nutrition and hygiene. 73 percent of women are active participants in Lao PDR's labour force. However, wage gaps and occupational segregation by gender persist. For example, women and girls constitute over 70 percent of unpaid family workers.

Women's participation and agency has steadily advanced in Lao PDR, but women's increasing representation within central government structures has not trickled down to the provincial and local levels. Significant gender gaps persist, despite the fact that the Lao Women's Union (LWU) is reaching out to promote female empowerment from the national to village levels.

## Activities

### Gender Action Plan to Foster Women's Empowerment in Sub-Projects

At organisational level, the PRF gender action plan has been mainstreamed in the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of all activities supported by the project in 2019. To enhance female empowerment, women's participation in decision-making processes and financial management at the local level was fostered. The PRF project separately identifies the needs of women, elder men and ethnic minority groups in planning and decision-making. The project also promotes female members in management committees and as management leaders, thus strengthening women's capacity in managing small projects through special trainings. In addition, the projects prioritise infrastructure creation that may reduce female workload. Thanks to this saved time, women can invest more time into income-generating activities.

The PRF project also supports livelihood and nutrition activities through self-help groups. To enhance women's activities in this area, the project provides clean cooking stoves and improves basic infrastructure such as rural roads and water supply to reduce time devoted to household chores.

In general, the project's data do not contribute to the domestic data system. It is worthwhile mentioning that the PRF team verified data and undertook several studies and evaluations to provide qualitative results. Moreover, it supported community-based monitoring and evaluation.

## Results

### Increased Women's Participation

In 2019, the PRF project supported 486 sub-projects, which were located in 450 villages across 43 poor districts in 10 provinces. The implementation of the sub-projects provided improved access to basic services for approximately 234'289 beneficiaries, of whom 49 percent were women and 84 percent were from ethnic minority groups.

The activities targeted to strengthen women's participation at local level were effective. At the community level, PRF has reached the planned number of women involved in decision-making in sub-projects by 95 percent (the target was 90 percent). Women's participation also increased in the livelihood nutrition activities. In 165 villages located in seven districts, 915 self-help groups (SHGs) were active with a total of 10'085 members, of which 85 percent were female and 80 percent were from ethnic minority groups. Crucially, 63.5 percent of SHG Management Committee members were female. This is a significant increase against the baseline of 21 percent.

At organisational level, there were 264 filled positions (including 78 female staff) operating at the central office in Vientiane Capital, as well as in 10 provinces and 43 targeted districts. The share of female staff is 30 percent. The PRF encourages more women, especially from small ethnic groups, to apply for PRF positions. However, the number of female applicants remains low.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Women's Agency

The PRF project has been working and supporting the communities, including both men and women, to have equal opportunities to participate in the village planning and prioritising their needs. However, particularly at community level, some challenges persist. For example, women who attended village meetings or planning processes did not actively and meaningfully participate in the discussion due to language barriers or limited knowledge and capabilities.

### Sources

Lao PDR, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2019): Poverty Reduction Fund Phase III Semi Annual Progress Report.

PRF Project (n.d.): Gender Action Plan in PRFIII-AF.

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Status Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Vientiane, Laos.

[The World Bank \(2019\): Lao, Democratic Republic of – Poverty Reduction Fund Project.](#)

[The World Bank and Asian Development Bank \(2012\): Country Gender Assessment for Lao PDR-Reducing Vulnerability and Increasing Opportunity.](#)



## GENDER REFERENCE INDICATOR

### Gender-Responsive Public Finance Management

Measuring resources available for gender equality and the participation of women in public finance management to improve gender-responsive planning, decision-making, and public spending (gender budgeting initiatives).

**Indicator:** Number of municipalities that conducted (one or more elements of) a gender budgeting process.

## Example 13: Gender-Principal Intervention

# Sustainable Integration of Gender Perspectives in Policy-Making and Budgeting Processes in North Macedonia

The overall objective of the “Promoting Gender-Responsive Policies and Budgets” programme is to improve women’s lives and support the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups through systematic integration of gender perspectives at all stages of national and local policy-making and budgeting processes in the Republic of North Macedonia. The programme enhances the government’s public finance management and its strategic planning processes to respond to the different needs of women and men. In addition, civil society organisations and women, especially the most vulnerable, are actively supported to participate in planning and decision-making mechanisms so that their priorities are fully reflected in public policies and budgets.

## Implementing Partners

The programme is implemented by UN Women and its national and local partners, the Association of the Units of Local Self-Government (ZELS), the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia.

## Beneficiaries

In 2019, more than 250 women and 80 men working in public administration or as elected officials directly benefitted from capacity development trainings.

## Finances

The programme runs from October 2018 until September 2022. The SDC co-financed the project in 2019 with an amount of CHF 548’338.

## Gender Analysis

### Persisting Gender Inequality in All Spheres of Socio-Economic and Political Life

Besides progressive legislation and policy frameworks in the Republic of North Macedonia, substantial gender inequalities remain pronounced in all spheres of socio-economic and political life. The persistence of traditional patriarchal roles and gender stereotypes continue to undermine the opportunities, capabilities and social status of women and girls. SGBV remains one of the most significant manifestations of discrimination against women in the country. The labour force composition in the country shows a highly skewed gender structure. The employment rate for women (34.6 percent) is significantly lower than the employment rate for men (53.6 percent). Currently, women face restrictions and limitations that hamper their labour market participation. Occupations remain heavily segregated by gender, and women generally bear the full load of unpaid household and care work. In the political sphere, while the introduction of the quota led to increased female representation in Parliament and Local Councils, the number of women is still very low. There are only five female ministers. Only six women are Mayors out of 81 elected persons. The multi-dimensional persistence of gender inequality indicates that the country needs structural reforms, highlighting the need for gender-disaggregated data, which are essential for evidence-based and gender-responsive policies.



## Activities

### Capacity Building in the Public Administration and for Civil Society Organisations

In 2019, the programme supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the establishment of the first Centre of Excellence in Gender Equality and Gender-Responsive Budgeting. In addition, expert and mentoring support on gender analyses of local policies and budgets was provided to the central level administration on the application of GRB in the national policies and programmes, as well as to the municipal administration in 21 Local Self-Government Units (LSGU). Furthermore, the programme strengthened civil society organisations' capacities to monitor policies and budgets with a gender-lens and to demand accountability and transparency on gender equality commitments.

The programme did not actively contribute to the domestic data system. However, it included interventions aimed to support the first Gender Equality Index Report for North Macedonia and further academic research on the empowerment of women in agriculture.

## Results

### Capacity Building Results in Gender-Responsive Programming and Budgeting

As a result of the capacity building support, 14 sectoral programmes of the line ministries in North Macedonia included gender equality priorities and gender indicators. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Economy established a working group on gender equality. Through the latter's support, the Ministry introduced a gender-sensitive measure within the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development that targets rural women. The Ministry changed a gender-discriminating criterion within the Programme for Rural Development 2018–2021. As a result, in December 2019, 100 rural women who held agricultural businesses were able to benefit from unconditional grant support.

A further result of the capacity building support was that 19 out of 21 municipalities participating in the programme directly allocated finances to implement measures for gender equality and mainstreamed gender within their programmes. In addition, eight LSGUs in the City of Skopje secured funds for the establishment of two counselling centres for survivors of domestic violence. Last but not least, new local strategies for gender equality were developed in Kocani, Aerodrom, Ohrid, and Gazi Baba.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Slow Implementation of Public Finance Reform and High Turnover of Public Administration Officials

The ongoing Public Finance Management Reform in North Macedonia has been designed to respond to the challenges encountered in the country's financial management system to improve efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, including expenditures to advance gender equality. This reform remains a challenge due to the slow progress in the implementation and sluggish transition from line to programme budgeting. The programme thus supports line ministries as well as the Ministry of Finance in mainstreaming gender within their strategic planning and budgetary processes. In addition, the high turnover of national and local public administration officials who are key GRB champions remains a challenge. Despite this, key progress has been made at local level where some municipalities have begun to create inter-sectoral working groups on GRB as a way to ensure sustainable local gender equality mechanisms.

### Sources

SDC (2018): Entry Proposal Promoting Gender Responsive Policies and Budgets.

SDC (2019): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2019. SDC Cooperation Office Macedonia.

### **Core Contribution to UN Women**

UN Women is the UN's entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It supports international political negotiations to formulate globally agreed standards for gender equality. Moreover, it assists UN Member States to implement those standards by providing expertise and financial support. Finally, it endorses other parts of the UN system in their efforts to advance gender equality. Switzerland was actively involved in the establishment of UN Women in 2010 and has since then been a consistent and important partner. Switzerland has been successful in ensuring that its own goals in the area of gender equality and women's rights are also pursued by UN Women. UN Women's current strategic goals (2018-2021) focus on 1) Setting global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women; 2) Women's political participation and leadership and gender-responsive governance; 3) Women's economic empowerment; 4) Ending violence against women; and 5) Women, peace, and security, including disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action. Out of these five goals, Switzerland has set priorities on economic empowerment and ending violence. Through UN Women, Switzerland achieves an important leverage effect, as international funds are used in accordance with its own goals.

With an annual spending of CHF 16 million for the period 2018-2020, Switzerland is the second biggest core donor. Thereby, it has contributed to gender-responsive planning and budgeting in 28 countries with a total female population of 1.2 billion. With the support of Switzerland, UN Women further advocated for the adoption of new policy frameworks for women's economic empowerment in 41 countries with a total female population of over 2 billion. In addition, UN Women contributed to the training of over 300 female military officers before deployment in peace operations, as well as to the deployment of 71 experts to support SGBV investigations (including to national authorities and the International Criminal Court).

# 5 Conclusion and Outlook

As this Status Report on Gender Equality demonstrates, the SDC and its partners jointly achieved respectable results to narrow the gender gaps in 2019. Guided by SDG 5 and the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–2020, the SDC followed its commitments to strengthen gender equality and female empowerment, thus contributing to a more equal world.

In its programmatic work, the SDC supports interventions with three thematic priorities and works in different geographical locations, with different stakeholders, and across all levels from household to global. For example, Mongolia's government made dedicated efforts to provide comprehensive support services to survivors of SGBV and to introduce a GBV database for fact-driven policy-making and programming. In Myanmar, women were able to attend targeted SRHR services, and both men and women were sensitised on gender-relevant, delicate health issues, including family planning and SGBV. Enhancing women's access to rural markets and strengthening their role as market players succeeded in the occupied Palestinian Territory and in Bangladesh. Other initiatives in Mali, Tanzania, and Jordan developed new saving products for women, provided women with legal land ownership, and enabled their successful completion of vocational training. In West Africa, radio programmes and leadership building formats enabled women to express their views, to engage in political parties or grassroots associations, and to start their own community initiatives. These projects and programmes often integrated combined efforts to empower women and to involve husbands, male opinion leaders, and broader community members to address gender inequalities. In some cases, encouraging first steps towards transformative change were observed: Husbands started to recognise women's contribution to the household income and to share domestic chores, while women increased their decision-making authority within the household and the larger community. Furthermore, as the case study of North Macedonia shows, national and local governments started to include gender equality priorities in their programmes and budget allocation. Among others, the capital city of Skopje secured funds for counselling centres for survivors of domestic violence.

Unsurprisingly, however, the complexity of empowerment processes inherently poses obstacles. Most frequently mentioned were the lack of sustainable funding by national and local governments, insufficient access to financial resources for women, their weaknesses in knowledge and leadership, and – above all – the resistance or indifference among husbands, local government representatives, and the private sector due to gender stereotypes and prejudices enshrined in social, cultural, and religious norms.

Within the framework of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, gender data are crucial in order to understand and monitor the progress towards gender equality. While gender-disaggregated data should be the norm, further disaggregation by demographic and social characteristics is needed for intersectional analyses that better grasp dynamics of discrimination and exclusion on the ground. Such fine-grained data would enable domestic policies and international development cooperation to be even more effective and inclusive. This, however, is far from where the global community stands today. At last, the herein presented project in Mongolia shows how development interventions can actively contribute to the domestic data system and, therefore, serve as one of the primary data sources for SDG indicators. Undoubtedly, together with other donors, there is room for the SDC to strengthen its support to national statistical capacities in a more consistent and systematic manner.

To improve effectiveness, the SDC promoted institutional learning and capacity building on how to become more gender-transformative. This implies more strategic and systematic integration of gender equality dimensions in all of the SDC's interventions and dedicated efforts in reducing remaining gender gaps. In this regard, the face-to-face meeting among SDC Gender Focal Points from all over the world and the subsequent training of trainers-workshop were an important milestone. Institutional learning and capacity development will continue in 2020, with a focus on analysing and sharing the SDC's experience in promoting women's political participation and empowerment and with further targeted training. The SDC Gender Strategic Lines will be revised to direct future work. This happens in accordance with Switzerland's new Strategy on International Cooperation 2021–2024

wherein gender is still prominently featured. Subject to the approval by the parliament, gender equality is featured in goal 9 and will continue to figure as a mandatory transversal theme. The elaboration of a set of reference indicators will provide guidance for setting targets and measuring transformative change.

Most importantly, 2020 is a crucial year for gender equality. It marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth Women World Conference, where the international community recognised that there can be no sustainable development and social justice without gender equality and women's rights as human rights. In addition, 2020 also marks 20 years of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Women, and the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SDG 5. The SDC will contribute to shape debates around these milestones, while staying engaged in global partnerships and pushing for tangible results. In 2020, Switzerland will host a series of conferences on data for development, some of which have a strong emphasis on gender data.<sup>57</sup> We have the chance to provide an excellent platform to fuel innovative ways of collecting, analysing and using data for policy-making, accountability, and advocacy purposes. A diverse range of involved stakeholders will discuss how data producers and users can collaboratively engage to create maximum impact – for SDG 5 and all of the Agenda 2030.

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<sup>57</sup> The UN World Data Forum, the Global Forum on Gender Statistics as well as the regional Gender Statistics Forum of the Europe, North America and Asia region.

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARI	Aggregated Reference Indicator
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
FDFA	Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
GPM	Gender Policy Marker
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SIGI	OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WPE	Women's political participation and empowerment

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